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JOSEPH OF DURAND

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JESUS OF NAZARETH:

HIS LIFE FOR THE YOUNG.

BY

JOSEPH P. THOMPSON, D.D.

Illustrated.



BOSTON:

JAMES R. OSGOOD AND COMPANY,

(LATE TICKNOR & FIELDS, AND FIELDS, OSGOOD, & Co.)

1876.



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ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE.

"BUT you must not call this a book for young people," said a German friend to whom I read these pages: "it is a book for me, for grown-up men and women; though perhaps you have young people in America who are forward enough to understand it. At any rate, you had better say, for the young in years and the young in heart."

Now, I am far from pretending, that in the United States, or in England, youth of twelve or fifteen are more advanced in general knowledge than their fellows in Germany. In some things, commonly, they do not know as much. But I believe that the training in the Bible which children receive in good families in England, Scotland, and the United States, and in the Sunday school as conducted in these countries, puts them far in advance of French and German children in knowledge of the Scriptures, and in ability to understand and to discuss subjects that grow out of the stories and the doctrines of the Bible. And, besides this, they come earlier to the habit of thinking, talking, and judging of such subjects for themselves.

This is not a book for children, but for youth,—say in the years from twelve to twenty; and such young persons do not need what is called "children's talk," but language which is simple and clear, though it may speak of things that are deep and sometimes a little hard to be understood. For the mind, as well as for the body, youth is the grow-

ing time of life ; and mind as well as body needs its exercise, its gymnastics, to bring it on in health and strength. There are some chapters in this book simple enough for a child of ten years ; and there are others that a youth of fifteen may have to read over two or three times before he will find out all that they mean. This grows out of the subject ; and it could not well be otherwise. And I think a bright youth would rather read a book that sets him thinking, and helps him forward, than one that is too simple and easy. He is glad and proud to be treated as one who is able to think, who wishes to know, and who is willing to study in order to learn. It is in this view that the charming book, "The Bible for Young People," is written, which has been translated into English from the Dutch of Dr. H. Ooort and Dr. I. Hooykass ; simple in style, but sometimes deep in meaning, and calling, perhaps, for the help of parents and teachers. This book, like that, may serve for a useful study in the Bible-class and around the family table. A guide who would lead others up to the best points of view should keep a little before and above them. And the best book for the young is a guide that leads them on higher and higher, making the way plain and pleasant as they go. Above all, they need such a guide in religion.

How is it in other things ? I remember, that, when I was a boy of fourteen, my teachers had already put me far on in French, in history, and in physical science ; that in Latin I had read Cesar, Sallust, Virgil, and Cicero, and, in Greek, Xenophon, and parts of Homer ; that I had studied algebra and geometry, logarithms and trigonometry ; had calculated eclipses of the sun and moon, had measured the height of steeples and towers, and learned the use of instruments of mathematics and of physics : but I do not imagine that I was one whit brighter or more advanced than the average boy of that age is to-day. I am sure that the youth who is pursuing such studies at school can understand any thing in this book if he will only try.

And why should he not try to master the life of the most wonderful person who ever lived? — a life made up of all that is pure and noble and true; a life of good words and good deeds; a life around which has gathered so much of history, of geography, of manners and customs, of poetry, of art, of government, of all that interests the student, and which is the source of ideas and principles that concern every man in his own higher life. The life of Jesus presents some difficulties in itself; and men who do not seem to have fairly understood it have made much difficulty and controversy about it. Without entering into disputes upon questions of fact or of doctrine, this book seeks to present the life as it was, to make *real* whatever carries the evidence of being *true*; and it is my hope, that all who read it will find in it such a view of Christ the Teacher as shall satisfy their minds, and such a view of Christ the Saviour as shall win their hearts, and bless their lives.

BERLIN, *Christmas*, 1874.



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JESUS OF NAZARETH:

HIS LIFE FOR THE YOUNG.

JESUS OF NAZARETH.

CHAPTER I.

THE SONG OF THE ANGELS.

ONE night, when I was a child, my mother roused me from sleep to show me a strange sight in the heavens, —the stars falling from the sky. All the neighbors were up, and at their windows or on the street, gazing with wonder and fear at a spectacle, the like of which they had never seen, and which nobody could account for. The stars fell so thick and fast that it seemed as if the whole sky was tumbling to the ground; and, as some of the stars looked like balls of fire, many feared that the end of the world had come, and that every thing would be burnt up. But such a shower of meteors is no longer a strange and startling sight: it may now be seen once or twice every year.¹ Astronomers have taught us that it

¹ Usually in August; sometimes also in November and in April.

has a natural cause ; and experience has shown that it brings no evil to the earth or its inhabitants. Even a child may look upon falling stars without fear, and with the same delight with which he sees the northern lights flashing through the sky.

Long, long ago, there was seen at dead of night a sight in the heavens, more strange and startling than this of the falling stars. It was then beheld for the first time, and has never again been seen. No astronomer can explain it ; no natural cause can account for it. But though it filled those who witnessed it with awe and terror, so that "they were sore afraid,"¹ instead of a warning of coming evil, it brought to them such a promise of peace and joy, as never before nor since was uttered in the ears of men. What they saw was not a shower of meteors dropping silently through the air, and vanishing in the distant darkness ; but living forms brighter than the brightest stars, hovering right around them, and singing in wondrous strains this heavenly song : "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."²

This vision was no dream, fancy, or fable. It did not appear to one or two persons lying in their beds, as the forms of Christmas-trees, of birds, flowers, and angels, sometimes come to children in their sleep. It did not come as a fancy to the brain of a poet or a painter, like the

¹ Luke ii. 9.

² Luke ii. 14.

beautiful images which we so often find in songs and pictures. It did not burst upon men suddenly awakened out of sleep, and too bewildered to trust their own eyes and ears. It came to shepherds who were accustomed to be awake all night, watching their flocks in the field; to men who could not easily be deceived or frightened by any thing that might appear to them in the open air, — men who were too simple-minded to make up such a story, and who showed their honesty in going at once to Bethlehem to find the child, and in telling all their townsmen what they had seen and heard. To us this should no longer seem so strange; for the life of Jesus shows that the birth of this most wondrous Person was worthy to be so announced from heaven. But the story also carries its own proof in the message that the shepherds brought. The words which they reported from the angels were such as these humble rustics could never have imagined, and no human mind had ever conceived, — peace and goodwill among all men throughout the whole world, through the coming of a Saviour.

When we reflect that these men were Jews, who bore no good-will to the Romans who then ruled over them, who looked upon all foreign nations with contempt and bigotry, and who expected that their Messiah would come as a prince and a warrior, to give them independence, and make them the ruling nation of the world, —

in one word, when we consider that these shepherds, because of the narrow and ignorant circle in which they moved, were so much the more likely to feel the bigotry of their race and their religion, — we shall see how impossible it was for them to have imagined words so sublime as this promise of peace in all the earth, words so lovely as these tidings of good-will toward men and of joy to all people. It is easier to believe that angels brought the tidings, than that the simple shepherds, or the plain writers of the Gospels, made up such a song. The best hopes of the world depend upon its being a message from heaven. The words are a greater wonder than the way in which they are said to have been given. The theme belongs to heaven; there is a ring to the words that is not of this world: and it is only when we take their tidings to be a promise from God, that we can make them real and true, and can find in them that comfort and hope for mankind that every one feels to be there.

Amid the sadness and sorrow that war, oppression, and crime had brought upon the world, the heathen poets had sighed for a golden age of peace and purity long ago lost, with a vague hope that the stars would bring it round again after thousands of years. But here is the promise of the gospel age of “peace and good-will” to begin at once, and to grow till it shall reach all men, and shall fill the earth. And with the promise of peace

was the means by which it should be brought about,—through a Saviour bringing good-will and teaching good-will to all men. We feel that shepherds and fishermen never made up thoughts and words so far above poets and philosophers. They could not have dreamed a dream so far above the Golden Age. They must have been taught from heaven, by the song of angels. Heaven alone could have foreseen that such universal peace and joy should spring from the birth of a little child, then “lying in a manger.” Heaven alone could have breathed such a blessing of good-will upon all the people of the earth.

At that time none but the Jews knew and worshipped the true God; and yet the Jews, so far from making their knowledge of God a reason for loving their fellow-men and carrying God’s love to them all upon equal terms, made this the rather a reason for separating themselves from other people in pride and scorn, and almost in hatred. But this song of the angels put into the mouths of these plain, ignorant, Jewish shepherds, the idea that all men should be brought to dwell together in peace and good-will, to the glory of one and the same God; and this through the coming of the Saviour, not to set up the Jews in a kingdom separate from other nations, and above them, but to bring to all people alike the same “good tidings of great joy.” It was for this that “the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord

shone round about them.”¹ It was for this that the still air was stirred with that wondrous song, as “a multitude of the heavenly host” swept down from the skies to bless the earth, then back to heaven, to give “GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST.”

¹ Luke ii. 10, 11.

CHAPTER II.

BETHLEHEM AND THE MANGER.

UPON the map of Palestine, about six miles south of Jerusalem, is Bethlehem; known also as the "City of David," because here the famous king and poet of Israel was born. The town is built upon a long, narrow ridge, which rises three hundred feet above the level of Jerusalem. In the neighborhood are the great reservoirs made by Solomon, to collect the water of the springs and the rain, which was then conveyed to the capital by an aqueduct.

Though Jerusalem is so near, it is hidden from Bethlehem by the hills; but about half-way between the two cities there is a fine view of both from the ridge crowned by the convent of Mâr Eliâs. We should not call Bethlehem any thing more than a village: it has barely three thousand inhabitants, and consists of but a few score of houses packed closely together, somewhat in the form of a triangle, with crooked, narrow streets; the whole surrounded by a stone wall, the circuit of which one could make on foot in less than an hour. But there is a charm in the situation of

Bethlehem: standing alone, it commands such fine views of the hills and valleys around, especially on the east, looking toward the mountains that border upon the Dead Sea. Here, below the terraced gardens of figs and vines that wind around the hill, are fair open fields that slope away to a lovely valley, which with its waving grain, and its little groves of olives and pomegranates, wears the aspect of an Oriental garden.

The farmers in Palestine do not, as in the United States, live alone in houses wide apart; for the roving bands of robbers, and the frequency of wars in Eastern countries, make it unsafe to live away from a settlement. But they have their homes together in villages and towns, where at night the wall or a guard gives protection; and by day they go out, often to a distance of miles, to till the ground. The land is not divided off by fences into separate fields, but stones are set up here and there as landmarks between one man's property and another's. Hence there are no enclosed pastures, as in New England, for sheep and cattle; but these are kept in the open fields, and must be watched over by men and dogs, to keep them from straying, and to defend them from robbers and beasts of prey. At night the sheep are driven into a common fold within the walls of the town. Each shepherd calls his own sheep by name, and "they know his voice, and follow him;"¹ but in mild weather they are

¹ John x. 1-6.

kept out all night in the open air. Indeed, across the valley from Bethlehem there is a grassy nook, or ledge, so sheltered, that at this day shepherds stay out there with their flocks all night in mid-winter; and just so were the "shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night,"¹ when "the glory of the Lord shone round about them," and the song of the angels rang through the air.

The traveller may chance to-day to see the shepherds watching their flocks upon those sunny slopes, and to hear them piping their simple melodies; and this may help to make that midnight scene more real and present to his fancy. But no music of earth can recall that heavenly strain which was uttered once, and once only, for all people and all time; yet it seems to have wrapped the world around with the warm, soft, living breath of divine love. It floated away to the south, into the desert of Arabia, and breathed into the law of Sinai the tones of love; it floated away to the north, to the mountain where Abraham led Isaac to be offered up, and breathed over Golgotha the odor of a divine sacrifice; it floated eastward over the sea of death, and seemed to stir even its drear and dismal waters with a breath of hope; it floated westward over land and sea, carrying to pagan and barbarian nations, and to people yet unborn, the message of good-will and peace. It came in the night, teaching that God's love wakes and watches over our darkness, our dan-

¹ Luke ii. 8.

gers, our sorrows, and our fears ; it came to shepherds, plain, rough men in the humblest calling, teaching that God stoops to the lowest, and can make the poor, the ignorant, the out-hangers of human society, the witnesses and messengers of his salvation to the world.

When the song had ceased, and the angels were gone away from them into heaven, “ the shepherds said one to another, Let us go now over unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.”¹ In those days there were no hotels such as the traveller now finds in every town, where by paying so much he can have food and lodging, and the comforts of home ; but travellers took with them their own provision and cooking-utensils, and fodder for their beasts ; and at noon or night halted at a caravansary built upon the roadside, or just within the gates of a town. This caravansary was simply a court, or yard, walled in on all sides, but open above, and having in the middle a raised platform upon which travellers sat to take their meals, and where also they made their beds at night. This platform, which sometimes had an upper story, was really the “ inn ; ” and round about it against the walls were little sheds, or stalls, for unloading the goods of the travellers, and for housing and feeding their beasts of burden. These

¹ Luke ii. 15-17.

stalls were furnished with cribs, or troughs, of stone or plastered brick; and from these *mangers* the cattle were fed. At this particular time, Bethlehem was as much crowded as a country village is at an agricultural fair. A census, or an enrolment, of the whole Roman empire had been ordered by the Emperor Augustus;¹ and by Roman law women and children had to be enrolled, as well as men; while by Jewish custom, in order to be duly registered and taxed, every one had to go to the head city of his family or tribe. The two customs appear in this case: for Joseph, being of the house and lineage of David, went to the city of David; and Mary must also be enrolled, and of course at the home of her ancestors. On reaching Bethlehem they found such a crowd, that the houses of all their friends were full; and the platform of the inn was so occupied, that they could have no place: so Joseph and Mary took up their lodging in one of the side-stalls; and when the babe was born they laid him in

¹ It appears from Roman authors (Tacitus, *Annal.* i. 11; Suetonius, *Octav.* 28, 101) that three times during his reign, at intervals of twenty years (A. U. 726, 746, and 767), the Emperor Augustus ordered a census of the whole people, and also that he prepared a statistical report of the empire, including Judea as one of its provinces. There is good reason also for believing that Quirinius was twice governor of Syria, and that the first time would correspond with the second census ordered by the emperor. Or, since it took a long time to complete a census, it may be that the census begun under another was finished under Quirinius, and so went by his name. (See in Zumpt's *Commentationes Epigraphicæ.*)

a manger as his cradle.¹ Though they were poor, this was not because of their poverty, but because all the room of the inn was taken up before they came; and no doubt the manger was made sweet and clean for the little babe to lie in; and there he lay all nicely wrapped in the fresh white clothes that had been prepared for him, when the shepherds, as if they had borrowed the wings and the words of the angels, came rushing in to hail him as “the Saviour, Christ the Lord.”

¹ Luke ii. 1-5.

CHAPTER III.

THE NAME JESUS.

WHAT shall be the baby's name? is almost the first question after a child is born. Sometimes this is settled at once, by the child's taking the name of a parent or grandparent, an uncle or aunt, almost as a matter of course. But all the family names may have been used already for other children, or none may seem good enough or pretty enough for this new pet; and so names from the Bible, from history, from poetry, and all sorts of fancy names, are proposed, thought over, and talked over, until it seems as if the poor little thing would at last have to go forth a nameless wanderer into the wide world. The Jews commonly used single names; and, when they gave double or compound names, these were either to mark the son of such and such a man, or the hope, the fear, the desire, or some other strong feeling, of the parent or the child; or some great event of the time, or some pious feeling toward God. But there was no trouble about naming this babe of Bethlehem.

Mary his mother had his name all ready for him when he came. And this was not a name that she had thought of or made up, or that any of her friends had proposed; but it had been given to her from heaven. Mary was a modest, pious maiden, of a plain but good family, that lived in the town of Nazareth, in the district of Galilee, more than seventy miles away to the north of Bethlehem. Nazareth was near the country of the Phœnicians, who were idolaters, about half-way between the Sea of Tiberias and the Mediterranean, and near the great routes of the caravans; so that all sorts of people resorted to it in the way of travel or of trade, and it came to have a rather bad name. No doubt too much has been made of the few hints about Nazareth in the New Testament. It was neither the least important nor the worst town in Palestine; yet for some reason it is spoken of as if it was no credit to any one to hail from such a place.¹ But this might be said of some towns at the West, and even in New England. If Nazareth had a bad name abroad, it had also its good people; and such might be even the more known and honored for the contrast of their goodness with the lack of piety in others. It would seem that the gentle, decorous, and devout manners of Mary had caused her to be respected and beloved by all who knew her; and we know that at an early age she was betrothed to a most worthy

¹ John i. 46; Acts xxiv. 5.

and excellent man, Joseph by name, who was by trade a carpenter. The fact that Joseph and Mary, and afterwards their children, were so well known to their townsmen, is a sign that Nazareth was a place of no great size. It seems also to have had only one synagogue.¹

The goodness and purity that we love and admire upon earth are loved also in heaven ; and Mary, who was by her family a descendant of David the great king of Israel, and by her training and character was a child of God, was chosen of God to be the mother of the long-promised Saviour of the world. One day, when she had gone alone for her devotions, she was startled by a strange, bright figure at her side, — so bright, so beautiful, appearing so suddenly but so gently, it must be an angel. She had often read in her Jewish Bible of angels coming with messages from God ; but she had never seen an angel, nor dreamed of one coming to her ; and now she trembled from head to foot, and was so agitated that she could not speak. But the angel spoke gently and kindly to her, told her not to be afraid, and then announced that she should become the mother of that wondrous child of whose coming she had so often read in the prophecies of the Bible ; and that this child would not be the son of Joseph, whom she was expecting to marry, but a special gift from God ; having no father upon earth, but sent to show to all men the love of his Father

¹ Matt. xiii. 54-58 ; Mark vi. 1-6.

in heaven. As a sign of this, the child was to be called Jesus,—the Saviour.¹

When Mary reported to Joseph this wonderful visit and promise of the angel, he was at first a good deal troubled; but there came to him also in a dream an angel, who confirmed all that Mary had told him. And Joseph loved and trusted Mary so much, that he at once took her under his protection as his espoused wife, and was ready to receive and care for this heaven-born child as if it were his own, and to appear before the world as the father of Jesus.²

Now, if Mary had been a person of a weak or vain mind,—if she had made up this story, or had been deceived by her own fancy,—she would have told the neighbors of the wonderful visitor that had come to her, and the wonderful promise he had brought her from heaven, and so have made herself an object of curiosity, of admiration, and of envy; as one who had seen an angel, and was to receive the Christ-child.

So, nowadays, a vain or weak young girl professes to have seen the Virgin, and gets fame and fortune from pilgrimages to the place of her vision. But Mary was humble, modest, discreet, and true; and so far from publishing this wonder in the village, or even whispering it in confidence to her friends, she told it to no one in Nazareth excepting Joseph, who had a right to be informed of it, and to whom

¹ Luke i. 26–28.

² Matt. i. 18–25.

she had pledged herself in all the confidence of love. By marrying her at once, Joseph showed the most perfect trust in her vision, and the most tender care for her good name. We see in him a devout piety, and a true and manly love. Mary trusted in him also as she had already trusted in God ; and she guarded herself from reproach, first, by telling Joseph all that had happened, and, next, by keeping it all from the gossiping neighbors. Yet her heart craved rest after such an excitement, and also the sympathy of a woman's heart in her sacred secret ; and so, leaving home for a while, she went away on a long journey to a secluded village in the hill-country of Judah, to visit her cousin Elisabeth, and get her pious and motherly sympathy and counsel.

Most heartily did this good dame welcome her young kinswoman ; and before Mary could begin to tell her wondrous story, and the sacred errand upon which she had come, she hailed her with joy and with reverence as the mother of the Lord.

At such a greeting, Mary broke forth into a song of praise, thanksgiving, and hope, in which the modesty of the virgin is blended with the tenderness of the mother, and the humility and reverence of the saint. "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden ; for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty hath done to me great things ; and

holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him, from generation to generation. He hath showed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; as he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever.”¹ This song, and the whole story of Mary’s visit, with her account of the coming of the angel, were probably written out at the time by Zacharias and Elisabeth, and afterwards given to the disciples of Jesus. Mary herself lived with the disciples after the death of Jesus, and no doubt then talked over the incidents of his birth and childhood. But at the first these wonders were confined to a small circle of the nearest relatives and friends; and neither at the time, nor afterwards, did Mary use them to get any notice or praise for herself. She was neither an enthusiastic girl, nor a dreamy nun; but all that we read of her in the Gospels shows her to have been a woman of sober mind, and of good sense and feeling. She told her story with simple truth; and in her song, while she speaks of the great blessing that had come to her, she does not boast herself, but praises God for his grace to the poor and the lowly. How differently do that story and song from the lips

¹ Luke i. 39–56.

of Mary read from the old fables of the heathen, and from the fables that have since been made up about the Virgin herself! Famous poems and romances have been written upon the legend or the fancy of a king's wooing a peasant-maid, and raising her to the palace and the throne, to become the mother of princes. The heathen have their fables also, of women who were wooed by the gods in disguise. But these run into common love-stories or earthly schemes, whereas a holy atmosphere surrounds this wonder in the life of Mary. Her joy was not that she should become a goddess, a saint, or a queen; nor her son, a prince, a poet, a philosopher, or in any way a man of earthly riches or renown: but that she should be the mother of the "Son of God,"¹ and that he should bring the mercy of God to the hearts of men as their Saviour. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins."² And so when the child from heaven came, and was laid in his strange crib beside the cattle in the stall, though his parents had no title to bestow upon him, and none of all the crowd in the inn cared for them or their babe, and none of the thousand descendants of the family of David then gathered at Bethlehem had a thought of him as their promised leader and restorer, yet his name was already known in heaven. It was on the lips of angels: they had told it to Mary and Joseph, they had taught it to the shepherds in their song; and his joyful

¹ Luke i. 35.² Matt. i. 21.

mother, having no voice or choice of her own, could only repeat, "His name is Jesus, for so he was named by the angel before he was born."¹ And the name which was first given from heaven has become above every name on earth.

¹ Luke ii. 21.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PROPHECIES FULFILLED.

HAVE you ever heard Handel's oratorio of "The Messiah"? If not, do not fail to improve the first good opportunity of hearing the most wonderful chorus ever composed. If you have already heard it, the bare mention of it will cause it at once to resound in your ear; not the "Grand Hallelujah Chorus," majestic, soulful, sublime, as this is, but the chorus that announces the birth of the Christ-child, in which the musical expression phrases every sentiment of the prophet so perfectly, that the very instruments speak the words, and seem to quiver with the emotions of wonder, joy, and adoration, to which they give utterance as from some living, breathing soul within them, that inspires and sways them all alike and all together. First, in softest notes of wonder, as in the hush of expectation, voice after voice, instrument after instrument, takes up the strain, like a lullaby of angels over the manger, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given;" next, like spray leaping up, comes the refrain, "And the government shall be upon his shoulder;" then, overtak-

ing one another in this round of joy, all voices and instruments give in unison the choral, "And his name shall be called" — but now a pause, as though heaven and earth stood silent to hear; then the whole chorus gathering itself into one mighty voice, and trumpets, stringed instruments, drums, cymbals, and the organ, uttering the same notes as with the very syllables of human speech, together ring out the names, "Wonderful! Counsellor!" till all the waves of sound rise and roll in majestic unison, "The mighty God! The everlasting Father!" then die away, gently murmuring, "The Prince of peace." For no other birth could such a song have been framed; to no other child could such titles have been given.

Seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus, the prophet Isaiah proclaimed that this wonderful child should be born. It was no uncommon thing for the priests, diviners, and poets who surrounded an Eastern king, to flatter him with high-sounding titles, and even to ascribe to him divine names and honors. Thus the great kings of Egypt, Persia, and Assyria were addressed as sons of the gods, sometimes as themselves gods, often as the sun in the heaven, as the light of the world, as the source of all good to their people, as a terror to their enemies, as sacred and immortal.¹ And in the same way the birth of a prince,

¹ See, for instance, the inscription of Pianchi Mer-Amon, in "Records of the Past," vol. ii. p. 81; and the Poem to Ramses II.,

the heir to the throne, was made the occasion of extravagant verses, greetings, and predictions. But the prophet Isaiah was not a courtier. He lived at Jerusalem under four successive kings of Judah; but his life was spent in rebuking sin, and in warning kings and people of the judgments of God. He did not spare even good King Hezekiah, but threatened him with war upon his city, his kingdom, and his family.¹ Yet, through all these warnings and woes, Isaiah kept up the promise and hope of a coming deliverer. But who and where was that deliverer? A century after Isaiah's death, the kingdom of Judah was destroyed, as he had said it should be; and it has never since been restored. Isaiah wrote also of the return of the Jews from Babylon to their native land, through the favor of Cyrus the Persian king; but the blessings that he promised from that return were more spiritual than temporal; and though he sometimes praises Cyrus by name, and calls him a shepherd anointed by the Lord,² he does not once name Cyrus, nor in any way allude to him, by any such titles or honors as the Wonderful, the mighty God. It was never the custom of the Jews to ascribe divine names and honors to their kings: this sort of flattery, so common with other nations, in their eyes was blasphemy.

given by Maspero in his volume, *Du Genre Epistolaire chez les Anciens Egyptiens*, p. 103.

¹ Isa. xxxix. 6, 7.

² Isa. xlv. 28, xlv. 1.

Much less would a Hebrew prophet give such names to a heathen prince, even though he should be an instrument of God for restoring the Jews to Jerusalem. Much as the Jews praised Cyrus for this, they could not look upon him as the wonderful child that Isaiah had promised. Their true deliverer was to be of their own race, and of the house of David. Hence these words of Isaiah could point only to their Messiah; and they were thus quoted by Jewish rabbis long before Jesus was born. Through the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, made about three hundred years before Christ, these words were familiar to the many Jews living out of Palestine who spoke the Greek tongue; and so the whole Jewish nation were continually looking for the appearing of this wondrous child; for since the prophecy was written there had not been born any one to whom such a description could apply, nor, indeed, any heir to the throne of David.

This child, though born of an earthly family, should yet be the Lord of heaven and earth. The Hebrews called one the "father" of that which he had made, or which he possessed; and this child is called the "Father of eternity," because from eternity he had lived the life of God. But, though clothed with the power of that life as "the mighty God," he should come into the world as the "Prince of peace;" and the song of the angels at Bethlehem was the echo of the voice of the prophet, "Peace on earth, good-will toward men."

And not only the child himself was pointed out by prophecy, and named in heaven, so long before he came, but the place of his birth was expressly foretold by Micah: "And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my people Israel."¹

And it was in Bethlehem, seven hundred years after this saying, that Jesus was born. Yet the circumstances that led to his being born in Bethlehem were such as no human mind could have foreseen. When this prophecy was written, the Jews were still an independent nation, having kings and laws of their own. They had soon after lost their kingdom; and, though a remnant had come back from captivity, they had lived for ages under the Persians, the Greeks, and the Syrians: then, though the Maccabees had made a good fight for independence, yet years before Jesus was born the Jews had been conquered by the Romans; and they were now ruled by a foreign king appointed from Rome. A Roman emperor had ordered a census to be taken; and for this purpose — since the Jewish custom was that every one should be enrolled at the place of his family — Joseph and Mary had to go from Nazareth to Bethlehem.² And thus a series of events that came to pass through another nation, which had hardly begun to exist when the prophet Micah wrote; events so distant, so many, and so

¹ Mic. v. 2.

² See in chap. ii. p. 12.

various, that nobody could have been so powerful as to produce them, so wise as to anticipate them, or so lucky as to guess them; events which no one connected with Jesus had any concern in bringing about; events which the Roman government certainly did not plan with any knowledge of this prophecy, or any thought of the Jewish Messiah, and which the Jews did not plan at all,—these events of a natural human history fulfilled an utterance of prophecy that had stood upon record for seven hundred years.

CHAPTER V.

JESUS TAKEN TO THE TEMPLE.

ONE Sunday morning I went into a queer old church in one of the most secluded valleys of Switzerland, and, taking a seat upon a rough bench that served for a pew, waited for the service to open. It was a lovely day; and as I looked out upon the grand old mountains whose snowy peaks seemed like pillars of alabaster holding up the blue arch of the sky, upon the forests that skirted their sides with green far up toward the glistening snow, upon the flowers that hung like a bright fringe around the base of the mountains, upon the great glacier that blocked up one side of the valley with its huge ribs of ice, from under which trickled a bright crystal stream, and upon the golden sunshine that threw its glory over all, I thought at first that there was no need of a church in such a place, where God had built so splendid a temple with his own hands. But in a moment I felt that this was the very place for a church to stand, as a sign that men did think of God in the midst of his works, and acknowledge him as the Creator and Lord

of all. And so these humble villagers had thought, who built their church at the very top of the valley, far above their houses and shops, that it might draw them away from work and noise and care, into its quiet and holy rest.

How beautifully the church-bell sounded, and the echoes that came back from the mountains, and the organ as it struck the chords for the opening hymn, which all the people, men, women, and children, began at once to sing! But just at this moment a rustling at the church-door attracted me; and I saw a procession coming in, made up of fathers and mothers bringing in their arms their babes to be baptized. These poor peasant-women were very plainly dressed. They wore coarse linsey gowns and clumsy wooden shoes; but they looked so neat and tidy in their snow-white caps and pinafores, and seemed so trustful and happy, as each in turn handed her babe to the minister, that it brought tears to my eyes to see a piety so simple and so loving; and I remembered, too, that He who "by his strength setteth fast the mountains" watches over the lambs and the sparrows, and takes little children in his arms to bless them. Just like these peasant-women of the Swiss valley, just so simple and lowly in her dress, so simple and lowly in her ways, and yet so sweet and hopeful in her trust and joy, was the peasant-girl of Nazareth, as, with all a mother's holy gratitude and love, she went up the mountain at Jerusalem to offer her babe in the temple.

By a law of the Jewish religion it was the duty of Mary, forty days after the birth of her son, to consecrate him thus openly to the Lord, and also to present herself to the priest with an offering of thanksgiving; and though she knew that Jesus was already consecrated by the name which the angel had provided him before he was born, and by the wondrous song of the heavenly host on the night of his birth, she did not feel that this could excuse her from that offering of herself with her child which the law required as an act of her own faith and love. Indeed, these things made her desire the more to show her thankfulness and joy at the gift of such a son. And yet so modest was she, so humble and believing, that, in taking Jesus to the temple, she said nothing of these wonders, did not boast of him as a marvellous child, but went in the most simple and quiet way, with such a little offering as she could afford.

A walk of two hours across the hills from Bethlehem would bring them to Jerusalem; and, in their circumstances of poverty, Joseph would be likely to go on foot; while the little donkey with which they probably came from Nazareth to Bethlehem would carry the mother and child. On the way, they passed the fields where Ruth the ancestor of Mary, like herself poor and a stranger, gleaned the ears of corn, and won the heart of Boaz; and the hill where Rachel died just as she came in sight of her new home, and where Jacob buried her with such sorrowing love. A little farther

on, they came in sight of the twin mountains upon which Jerusalem was built, and on top of these the walls and towers of the city ; the marble pillars and gilded gates and cornices of the temple shining behind the whole. Mary had seen the city and temple before, and had felt the pride and joy with which every Jew looked upon the holy place ; but never did the city seem so splendid, the temple so sacred, as on this day when she was carrying all the treasure of a mother's love up to the house of the Lord.

The temple was open to rich and poor alike ; and the priests were ready to serve all who came with their offerings. So Mary was not ashamed to let it be seen that she was poor, and could afford to bring only two little pigeons, instead of a lamb and a turtle-dove, for her thank-offering ; but in her heart she gave all that she had, and more than any queen could give, in bringing to God the child which had come to her with such signs from heaven, and such promises to the world. With no pride in the honor that God had put upon her, and claiming no notice nor favor for the child, she would have been content with making the offering of a mother's piety, and receiving the blessing of the priest. But, though Mary could hide deep in her heart all her own thoughts and hopes and wishes for her child, she could not hide from the world its Saviour. The last of the prophets had foretold that the Lord " should suddenly come to his temple ; " ¹ and now the spirit of

¹ Mal. iii. 1.

prophecy awoke within the temple to announce that the Lord had come.

There was living in Jerusalem a pious old priest who had set his heart upon seeing the Saviour; for, from what Daniel and other prophets had written, he believed the Messiah must soon appear. This good old Simeon prayed and “waited for the consolation of Israel;” and at last God promised him that he “should not see death until he had seen the Lord’s Christ.”¹ Just at this moment he came into the temple, and was moved by the Spirit of the Lord to take Jesus in his arms; and, as he lifted him up to bless him, he broke forth into a song of praise over him as “the Saviour that God had prepared for all nations,—a light for the Gentiles, and the glory of Israel.”² It was a beautiful sight,—this old man in such rapture over the babe, that he was willing to die, now that he had looked upon his face. Indeed, it was as if the angels had left the smile of heaven upon Jesus, and Simeon had caught it, as he said, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”³

These words of Simeon filled Joseph and Mary with new wonder and joy; for they seemed to give a definite meaning to all the strange things that had already happened concerning the child. Perhaps in their hearts they began now to think of him as a king, perhaps also to dream of the

¹ Luke ii. 25-27.

² Luke ii. 25-33.

³ Luke ii. 29, 30.

honor he would bring to his parents. But Simeon could see farther into the future than they, and he better understood the spiritual meaning of the prophecies; and, lest Mary should be too much lifted up with hope and pride, he went on to say, that sorrows as well as joys would come to her through her boy; that his appearing would show who among the Jews were men of true piety; that many would refuse to receive him as the promised Messiah, and because of his humble birth and his holy doctrine would speak against him, and hate him; and that at last the trials and sorrows that Jesus must suffer would pierce through his mother's heart like a sword.¹ Alas, alas! how true this proved when his mother saw him thrust out of the synagogue at Nazareth, threatened with stoning at Jerusalem, and at last beaten by a mob, and hung up on the cross! But it was not meant that Mary should go away sad; and while Simeon was giving these warnings along with his blessing, a prophetess named Anna, a widow eighty-four years old, who lived in the temple, came in, and began to speak the praises of the child, not to his parents alone, but to bystanders, and to proclaim aloud that he was the promised Saviour.

Had Joseph and Mary chosen to remain, they could soon have gathered a crowd around their child, and have gained much notice for him and for themselves, by telling the story

¹ Luke ii. 34. 35.

of his birth. But they felt too deeply the honor they had received from God to desire to use this for the praises of men: all was to them too real, too solemn, too blessed, to be trifled with for vanity or gain: and so, having finished the errand that brought them to Jerusalem, they left the temple and all these chances of worldly fame, and went quietly back to their humble lodgings at Bethlehem. But there, as we shall see, the child Jesus was to receive even greater tokens of honor, through the coming of the wise men to worship him, with their gifts.

As Mary turned to go down the steps of the temple with the consecrated child in her arms, we may well imagine that she had in her eyes that wonderful look which Raphael has given her in the picture of the Sistine Madonna, in the gallery at Dresden, which is known all over the world by copies, engravings, and photographs. She saw nothing of the splendors of the temple, its shining walls of marble, its glittering gates of brass, of silver, and of gold, its rows of lofty pillars carved with branches and flowers, and that wondrous golden vine twined over the great porch, with clusters of jewels sparkling under its leaves; she saw nothing of the palaces and gardens that lay at her feet across the ravine from the temple-gate; nothing of the aqueducts and fountains, the thousand cupolas like tents upon the house-tops, the gateways and towers of the city, that made Jerusalem "the joy of the whole land;" she saw nothing

even of the beauty of the earth and the sky, the “mountains round about the city,” that seemed to roll away in billows westward to the sea, southward to the desert, eastward to the Jordan ; the green mount of Olivet overlooking the temple, the valley of the Kedron blossoming below ; nothing of the earthly, nothing of the human, did Mary see, as with a face subdued with awe, tender with love, beaming with hope, she came forth from the sanctuary where she had given her child to God : but, as she looked toward Bethlehem, she seemed to step upon the clouds, and to be surrounded with a choir of cherubs greeting the cherub in her arms. Yet, at this moment of her heavenly exaltation, the pang of a mother’s grief passed over her ; and her eyes melted at the thought of the sword that should smite his head, and pierce her soul. But in the same instant there shone from the eyes of the child a light as from heaven, chasing all pain and sorrow and sin away, — a bow of mercy and of peace springing out of an infinite love, reaching over the world and time, to end in an infinite joy.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WISE MEN FROM THE EAST.

To the people of Europe and of America, the land where Jesus was born is itself "the East;" but at the time of his birth the countries of Asia lying beyond Jordan, especially of the Assyrians and the Chaldeans, were "the East" to the Jews who lived in Palestine. A vast and dreary desert lay between the Jordan and the Euphrates. Across that desert their fathers had been carried as captives; in that East, "by the rivers of Babylon," Ezekiel, Daniel, and others of their great prophets, had lived; and there many Jews had remained as settlers when the body of the nation returned to their own land.

The people of the East were much given to the study of the stars. Over their broad plains the heavens are stretched as an immense arch, visible upon every side; and through their clear atmosphere the stars shine with a wonderful brightness and beauty. Their "wise men" observed all the changes of the heavens; made a record of eclipses, and of the conjunctions of the planets; and they imagined that

they could read, in the signs in the sky, the fortunes of men and of nations. They had formed a system of astrology, by means of which they professed to be able to predict or to explain public events, such as war or peace, famine or plenty, the birth or death of a prince; and they were consulted for the interpretation of dreams and omens, as well as for the explanation of any strange appearances in the natural world.

In the Book of Daniel, we find the *Magi* connected with the court, and employed by the king as counsellors in affairs of state. They were believed to be in communication with the world of spirits, and to have a knowledge of the future. King Nebuchadnezzar even called upon them to bring to his remembrance a dream that he had forgotten; and such faith had he in their power over the unseen world, that he supposed they were trifling with him, when they told him that no one could do what he required, except the gods.¹

In Persia and Chaldea the *Magi* were an order of priests; among the Phenicians, also, the high-priest was called “first *Magus*”;² and the word is said to mean “the wise one,” with special reference to spiritual knowledge or inspiration. Like the priests of ancient Egypt, these *Magi* of Persia veiled under their sacred character the mysteries of science, and the wisdom of the past. They had charge of the education of the princes, and hence had great influence over

¹ Dan. ii. 1-13.

² Movers Phön. ii. 1, 335.

the king after he came to the throne; and they were often men of true learning, as well as of sincere faith in their religion.

But how came such men to be interested in looking up the new-born king of the Jews, who were a foreign people, and who had no longer any political power of their own? Going back to the time of Daniel, we find, that, after he had told Nebuchadnezzar his dream, the king made him "chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon," and "master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers."¹ Of course the sayings of Daniel concerning the coming of the "Son of man" as "Messiah the Prince," and the kingdom which the God of heaven would set up, "never to be destroyed,"² were known to the *Magi* of his day; and the wonderful events of his life and times, the story of Daniel in the lions' den, and of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace, and of the return of the Jews to Palestine by the decree of Cyrus, would be handed down in the school of the wise men along with these predictions of a king to arise out of Israel.

Besides, a large colony of Jews, after the yoke of their captivity was broken, chose to remain in the region of Babylon, instead of returning with the mass of the nation to the land of their fathers. These kept up their religion, and their faith in the Messiah; and, as many of them rose

¹ Dan. ii. 48, v. 11.

² Dan. vii. 13, 14; ix. 25-27.

to wealth and influence, they must have attracted the attention of their neighbors to that promise of a coming king, which was read in their synagogues every sabbath day, and which held them together so strongly as a people.

At all events, for some cause or other, there seems to have been, throughout the East, a wide-spread belief, that, at about the time of the birth of Jesus, there should go forth from Judea the conquerors of the world. Whether this expectation was an offshoot from the Jewish faith in a Messiah, or was one of those popular beliefs that spring up, one knows not how, and that move whole nations with a common hope or fear, we have no means of determining; but the fact that such a notion prevailed, gives a natural explanation of the coming of these wise men of the East to Jerusalem, to search for the new-born king of the Jews. By their calling they were upon the lookout for any person or event that might promise to make a stir in the world; through their study of Daniel's dates and predictions, which were kept among their learned books, they had come to expect, at about this time, the appearing of some wonderful person in Judea; and perhaps they themselves were so far believers in the God of the Hebrews, and in their sacred Scriptures, that, in seeking the king of the Jews, they were moved by a personal faith, as well as by their love of wonders. What started them upon the journey was the appearing of a new star, which they looked upon as a sign

of some great event, and in their fancy made it the herald of this promised king. The account of the star given by Matthew is the story of the wise men, — what they saw and believed: “We have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.”¹ And their seeing the star again, on the way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, must also have been reported by the wise men themselves: “The star which they saw in the east went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.”² What, then, was this strange star? Where did it come from? What did it mean? Was it a new star created on purpose to guide these wise men to the birthplace of Jesus, which shone only so long as they were seeking him, and vanished from the sky as soon as they had found him? No such thing is said or implied in the story; and we are not at liberty to suppose a miracle where none is stated nor required: hence we must read this story, so to speak, with the eyes of the wise men, and through their habits and beliefs.

Astronomers have long observed that several of the fixed stars at times grow so bright as to appear like new, strange objects in the sky, and then grow so pale as almost to fade away. “One of the most remarkable of these periodic stars is often termed *Mira*, or the *wonderful* star. This star retains its greatest brightness for about fourteen days, being then usually equal to a star of the second magnitude. It

¹ Matt. ii. 2.

² Matt. ii. 9.

then decreases, and in about two months ceases to be visible to the naked eye. After remaining thus invisible for six or seven months, it re-appears, and increases gradually for two months, when it recovers its maximum splendor.”¹ And besides these changes in the brightness or the apparent size, and also in the color, of well-known stars, we have accounts of *temporary* stars, new stars never before seen, which suddenly came to light, and, after remaining a while in the same position, “have died away, and left no trace behind.”² Such stars have been remarkable for color and for brightness. The Danish astronomer, Tycho Brahe, has given a minute account of such a star, which he saw for the first time on the 11th of November, 1572. “Raising my eyes as usual, during one of my walks, to the well-known vault of heaven, I observed with indescribable astonishment, near the zenith, in Cassiopeia, a radiant fixed star, of a magnitude never before seen. In my amazement, I doubted the evidence of my senses. However, to convince myself that it was no illusion, and to have the testimony of others, I summoned my assistants from the laboratory, and inquired of them, and of all the people that passed by, if they also observed the star that had thus suddenly burst forth. I subsequently heard that, in Germany, wagoners and other common people first called the attention of astronomers to this great

¹ Loomis's Astronomy, p. 290.

² Loomis, Recent Progress of Astronomy, p. 171.

phenomenon in the heavens. For splendor this new star was only comparable to Venus when nearest to the earth. Those gifted with keen sight could, when the air was clear, discern the new star in the daytime, and even at noon. At night, when the sky was overcast so that all other stars were hidden, it was often visible through the clouds, if they were not very dense. In December, 1572, its brilliancy began to diminish, and the star gradually resembled Jupiter; but by January, 1573, it had become less bright than that planet. Through the year 1573 it grew less and less distinct; and in March, 1574, the new star disappeared, after having shone seventeen months. This star went through several changes of color. During the first two months it was white; then it turned yellow; afterwards, in the spring of 1573, it was red; and in May of that year it became white again, and so remained as long as it was visible."

The great German astronomer, Kepler, has made one of these stars famous by the fine description that he gave of its coming and going. To his pious feeling the sight of this star suggested the star seen by the wise men in the east.

On the 17th October, 1604, Kepler first saw a new star, which shone with a pure white light, and was brighter even

¹ For a full account and list of these new, or temporary stars, see Humboldt's *Cosmos*, vol. iii. sect. 4. and Bruhn's *Atlas der Astronomie*. Besides the two noted by Tycho Brahe and Kepler, the most important on record are B.C. 134, A.D. 389, 945, 1006, and 1264.

than the planets Mars and Jupiter, which were visible at the same time ; but, as it was watched from time to time, its light was seen to be unsteady, and to change its color from white to yellow, then to crimson, and then to a pale dull shade, all the while growing less and less distinct, until finally it went out in darkness. It was seen for the last time in October, 1605, then very small and dim. But in 1848 an astronomer in London¹ saw, in the same place where Kepler had observed his star, a strange star, which at first flashed with a reddish light, and, after going through many changes in color and brightness, disappeared early in 1850. This may have been a return of the same star after more than two hundred years ; or a new star may have chanced to appear in about the same place with that which Kepler saw. The season in which he observed this strange star was noted for many wonderful and beautiful signs in the sky. The two great planets, Jupiter and Saturn, had come so near together that their rays seemed to blend with a brightness like the blazing-out of a new sun ; and a little later the planet Mars came so near to this circle that all three shone together, a trinity of glory, as if about to merge into a simple star. And, just when the eyes of astronomers were fixed upon these rare and brilliant signs, in the same quarter of the heavens came this new and wondrous star. As Kepler describes it, " Like a king, coming in triumphal pomp, who

¹ Mr. Hind.

sends his heralds before to station his court in their places, that all may do him honor, so this star, coming after these wondrous signs, chose for itself a place near the path of the sun, as if it would receive the salutations of all the planets."

By a careful calculation, Kepler found, that, in the year in which it is now supposed that Jesus was born,¹ Jupiter and Saturn came into conjunction, passing each other three times in seven months: first, in May; the second time, about the beginning of October, when they kept company for several days with a splendor that must have drawn all eyes to observe them; and again early in December. The Magi in the East, who were always watching the skies, must have been excited by these strange signs to expect some great event; the time was near for the birth of that wonderful king described by Daniel; and if then, as in the time of Kepler, a new star suddenly appeared in the vicinity of these planets, shining brighter than them all, they must have taken that for the birth-star of the king, and would naturally

¹ Many scholars now agree in fixing the birth of Jesus in the year of Rome 747, or B.C. 7; i.e., in the seventh year before the common date of the Christian era. See Dr. A. W. Zumpt's learned treatise, *Das Geburtsjahr Christi*. For the astronomical signs of the year B.C. 7, see Kepler, *De Jesu Christi vero Anno Natalitio*; Ideler, *Handbuch der Chronologie*, ii. 406, and *Lehrbuch der Chronologie*, p. 428; also Pritchard. *Memoirs of Royal Astronomical Society*, vol. xxv. Prof. Pritchard agrees with Ideler as to the fact of three conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn from May to December, B.C. 7; but he opposes the notion that this phenomenon was the star of the Magi.

have believed that it pointed toward the place where he was. And so, with their belief in signs and wonders, they rose up, and travelled from the East many hundred miles to find in Judea the birthplace of the deliverer of the world. All this was natural, and yet it fell in with a wonderful Providence.

We know that God chose the rainbow as a sign of his mercy, after the flood. Those beautiful colors were not then for the first time painted upon the sky. Ever since the sun first shone upon falling drops of rain, it had turned each drop into a prism through which the rays of pure white light glittered like gems of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. It is the very nature of light to produce this brilliant array of colors when it passes in a certain way through a globule of glass or of water ; and so the rainbow was not created at the flood, nor on purpose to be a sign that there should never be another such deluge. But after those long, long weeks of rain, in which the waters had risen above the houses, above the trees, above the hills, drowning men and cattle, destroying all the people of the land except the family in the ark, and for forty days there had been nothing to be seen but roaring waves, and dark and dreary clouds, when at length the sun broke out again, and lighted up the valleys and the trees as they began to appear, and turned the last dark cloud, as it was dropping its last shower, into a great banner of light flying its splendid streamers across the sky, — it seemed as though a new world had been

created, and God had "set the bow in the heavens" as a sign of hope, a promise of mercy.

And so, though the star that appeared to the *Magi* might have shone with the same brilliancy had Jesus not been born, yet its coming was so timed to his advent, that these watchers of the skies, whose imagination saw the events of human life pictured in the stars, might well have taken it for a sign, and used it as a guide. The wonders of God's works in nature chime in with the wonders of his ways in providence and grace ; so —

"Happy stars, timing with things below,
Beat to the noiseless music of the night."

And as that new star stepped into the circle of the planets so quietly that it did not disturb their motions, nor change their courses, so that new Life from heaven, that should be the guide of all after-ages, came into the circle of our earthly life so gently, so humbly, that men would have known no more of its advent than did the cattle in the stall, had not the angels sung the birth of the Saviour in a song the stars might listen to, had not the star shone over his manger with the brightness of an angel.

Of course I would not pretend to say that this meeting of the planets, described by Kepler, was the real sign in the heavens that led the Eastern astrologers to set out upon their search for the unknown king of the Jews. The date

of the birth of Jesus is not positively settled ; and even this wonderful appearance of the planets may not have answered at every point to what is said about the star at Bethlehem. But it does show us how a strange but natural phenomenon in the sky may have started up men who believed in heavenly signs, and who were looking out for something new. Matthew did not see the star ; he does not speak of it as a miracle ; and we do not need to make up a miracle, to explain the coming of the wise men.¹ If a meeting of the planets, such as Kepler describes, gave the appearance of a star of strange brightness ; or if, in reality, a new, temporary star then drew the notice of the wise men, — it would accord with what astronomy teaches, that this sign in the heavens should for weeks or months have been lost to their view, and that they should have caught sight of it again, after they reached Jerusalem, seeming to hang directly over Bethlehem. They were told to go to Bethlehem ; and, to their faith in heavenly signs, the star served both as a witness and as a guide. Another conjunction of the same planets could have caused this effect ; or, they may have seen the star first as a morning star, and again as an evening star in another quarter.² In any case, we must remember that Matthew does not give this as a wonder that God had created, but only reports the story of the astrologers.

¹ See chap. vii., on Wonders.

² In 827 two Arabian astronomers observed at Babylon a new star, whose light equalled that of the moon in her quarters.

The visit of the wise men to Bethlehem has given rise to many fables and poems, and has been represented in pictures and in sculpture by some of the greatest artists of the world. As three kinds of gifts are mentioned, — “gold, frankincense, and myrrh,” — the number three has been fixed upon for the *Magi* themselves; and they are pictured as kings coming with a great retinue of camels and of servants carrying costly presents. These kings are made to represent different countries, such as Arabia, Tarsus, Saba, Ethiopia; and among the gifts are sometimes pictured the animals of these countries, — elephants, peacocks, parrots, and the like, — as well as gold and jewels made into the shape of a crown. The story goes, that the star resembled a crimson cross; that, when the kings knelt beside the manger, the babe reached out his hands over their heads, and blessed them; that Mary his mother gave them a linen band in which Jesus had been wrapped; that, on going away, they found they could work miracles with this linen band; that they became preachers of the gospel, and went as missionaries to the barbarians, and finally were put to death as martyrs; that their bones were gathered up, and taken to Cologne; and now, in the great cathedral of that city, may be seen a silver case adorned with precious stones, in which are three skeletons said to be those of these three kings, their skulls crowned with diamonds, and their names written in rubies. The most costly and beautiful works of art have thus been

gathered around the story of the wise men; but how much more beautiful and precious is the story as it is told in the Gospel! and how like the simple truth of history that story reads, by the side of all the fables which have been invented to adorn it! Instead of kings from different parts of the world, coming with a long train of servants, and making a splendid show, Matthew tells us only of wise men who came from the same country, and returned again to their home. They came quietly, as men of science following a star, and as priests and prophets seeking a new light in the world's history. They went first to Jerusalem, as was natural, expecting to find the new-born king at the capital, and in the royal house; they inquired at the palace, and of the priests; and, when at last they were sent to the little town of Bethlehem, they had such faith in their own doctrine of the stars, that they did not hesitate to lay their gifts before a child who had no signs of a prince about him; whose parents were there upon a visit, and were so poor that they could hardly provide shelter and comfort for their babe. Then these wise men having obeyed their own belief in the stars, and having done their errand, went quietly back to their own country.

Nothing more is said about them. The whole story of their visit is told in three or four verses of the Gospel; and there is no attempt to make much of them or of their coming. Matthew does nothing more than record the

incident as a fact. Yet, without knowing it, these *Magi* were the heralds and prophets of the coming of the Gentile world, with its treasures of science, of commerce, and of wealth, unto the knowledge and the service of Christ. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."¹ The king of the Jews sought to destroy him in his cradle. The priests and Pharisees despised and hated him, and were not satisfied till they had taken his life. But the humble shepherds acknowledged Jesus as the Saviour; and the wise men brought the homage of other nations to him as king of the Jews. All Christian nations are their followers. These *Magi* head the long procession of scholars, nobles, princes, who have honored the name of Christ. By their gifts, the products and the riches of the world were consecrated to him, and gold and incense were redeemed from mere merchandise, to show forth the praises of the Lord. Yet these gifts have value only as the offering of love, the homage of the heart. And to us who know who this child of Bethlehem was, and what gifts of salvation he has brought, all the wise and the good of the past are calling; the voices of the stars, the remembered prayers of departed saints, that still linger as angel-voices in the air, are calling, — that we also should follow the Day-Star that has risen upon our hearts, and carry the offering of our love, the consecration of our lives, to the feet of Jesus.

¹ John i. 11.

CHAPTER VII.

A CHAPTER OF WONDERS.

THERE is in our minds a something that delights in wonders. The wonders of science, the wonders told by travellers, the wonders invented for story-books, have a charm for youth, which does not wholly pass away with riper years. This love of marvels may be abused ; and children are sometimes frightened, sometimes deceived, and ignorant persons are imposed upon, by stories made up on purpose to act upon their fancy or their fears. No doubt there has been, and still is, as much deception practised about religious wonders as about any thing else in the line of fraud. But, for all that, this *wonder-faith* has its good and proper uses ; and there is a something in the world of reality about us, and in the region of possibility above us, that answers to the power of imagining and of believing within us. Just as the eye is formed for light, the ear for sound, and every faculty for some corresponding use, so this much-abused faculty of faith has its brighter and better side. It is not only a part of our nature, but one of its

higher and nobler parts. How dull and tame, indeed, would the world become if we were shut up to believing only what we can see and touch, and could never rise, as with the wings of a bird, into the region of spiritual life and powers, and feel the reality of something above the mere laws of the physical! How mean would be our lives stripped of such associations with the invisible, clogged by the dull routine of sense, and never relieved by a single flight of the soul from its dark nest within, to the free air above! Like every other faculty, faith must be educated; and especially it must be trained to distinguish between wonders that are real and true, and wonders that are false, — whether these are created by one's own fancy, or are invented by evil and deceitful men.

The Bible has been said to be a book of wonders. But it is not true that the Bible was written for the sake of telling wonders, nor that it is made up chiefly of wonders, nor that it uses wonders to work upon our imagination, or to fill us with surprise. All the wonders told in the Bible come in to illustrate some truth or duty concerning God or our fellow-men; to help us to conceive a higher state of being, a better, holier life; and the moral lesson and the wonders fit together like a costly pearl set round with diamonds, — each is in its place. These wonders that surround the birth of Christ are even so many diamonds: they make the proper and becoming setting of such a life. They seem

natural to such a person as Jesus proved to be, and to the purpose for which he came into the world.

In a later chapter I shall speak of the wonders that he did, and of the subject of miracles at large.¹ It is enough here to say, that, when the object is worthy of God's acting in what seems to us a strange and special way, then the miracle itself becomes natural, reasonable,—just what might be looked for in such a case. Not all wonders are miracles; for a miracle is something so plainly against or aside from the observed course of nature in the thing that is done, that only a direct act of God could bring it to pass: yet God may use also wonders in the world of nature to call attention to some new word of truth, or act of love. It is important to keep this fact in view for the right understanding of the wonders recorded in the Bible, and for the true significance of miracles as proofs of God's presence and power. When we meet with something in the Bible that seems to us marvellous, the first thing is to understand the record, to make clear what the fact is that is recorded, and to make certain the evidence of its being a fact. Then we must receive the wonder as a fact, just as we receive many facts in nature and in life that we are not able to account for. This sort of faith reason itself requires of us. If now we see that the event was clearly above and beyond all natural causes, then we can only refer it to the direct

¹ See chap. xxvii.

act of God. But we are not at liberty to make up a miracle for the sake of explaining a mystery, where the Bible itself does not, either in so many words or by clear construction, point to a miracle. Some of the early Christians thought they could increase the authority of the Gospels by adding to them a great many legends of Christ and his mother; and in the second and third centuries new "Gospels" were written, full of marvels about the infancy and childhood of Jesus. But the true Gospels do not make a parade of miracles, nor so multiply wonders as to cheapen them. To keep the wonders of the Bible in their true place, as apart from and above all other wonders, we must not call every strange thing a miracle, nor make wonders the chief object of the book. The Author of nature often uses nature for moral ends; and some of the wonders of the Bible were clearly God's higher teaching through the things that he hath made. An instance of this was given in the last chapter. It was no miracle, that a new star should be seen in the heavens, nor that, to men accustomed to read signs and wonders in the sky, this should seem to halt as a sign over a certain spot in Judah; but that its appearing at such a time and place should serve to lead believing, waiting watchers to the birthplace of the Saviour, was a use of wonders and of the wonder-faith, appropriate and in the highest sense natural to such an event. We cannot say that it was a miracle for angels to shine forth in the night, and break

out into song ; for we do not know but the angels are in the air, and might at any time, quite naturally, make themselves visible. But such words as they sung — words that no human ear had ever heard, no human lips had ever spoken, no human mind had ever imagined — seem to belong to angels, and to make the wonder natural in its place. That Jesus should be born into the world without an earthly father, was not only a wonder, but a miracle ; but when we study his life of love, his character of goodness, his deeds of mercy and of power, and begin to feel that this most wondrous man, so apart from and above all other men, and yet so one with us all, “was none other than the Son of God,” then it ceases to be strange that he should come into the world as no other man ever did, or that an angel should come to tell this beforehand to Mary. And, above all, when we consider what sin and suffering and sorrow were in the world, it ceases to be a wonder, that God should set all heaven a-singing, and all the stars a-chiming to their song, to tell the glad news that a Saviour was born, “who should save men from their sins.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

Two hundred and fifty miles away to the south-west of Bethlehem is a wonderful land, where the sun always shines, and the earth is like a garden. Upon each side of this land is a great desert, made up of mountains, rocks, stones, and sand, with here and there an oasis of life and verdure, but with no fields nor forests, no towns, villages, farms, nor factories, to break the desolation. But this desert is broken in two by that wonderful river, the Nile, which rises more than two thousand miles back, in the great lakes and the snow mountains of the heart of Africa, and which brings down the rich, sweet water that supplies the whole land of Egypt, and once a year covers it with the flood that makes it so fresh and fertile. It was among the reeds that grew upon the edge of this river, that the baby Moses was hidden by his mother in the tiny ark of bulrushes, when the wicked king had given orders that all the Hebrew boys in Egypt should be put to death. And it was just such a cruel order of the king of the Jews, to kill all the little children in Bethlehem,

that caused Joseph and Mary to hurry away with Jesus in the night, and carry him to Egypt, which was now a place of safety.

The coming of the wise men from the East to Jerusalem, to inquire after the new-born king, made a great stir in the temple and in the palace, and was, of course, brought to the ears of Herod. This Herod was a man of a jealous and cruel disposition ; and some of the crimes he committed were so strange and violent, that he must have been subject to fits of insanity. He began his reign with the slaughter of all who had resisted his attempt to make himself king ; and, after he gained his end, any one who chanced to displease him, or who seemed to stand in the way of his ambition, he would order to be put to death, sometimes sacrificing hundreds of his subjects in an outbreak of passion or of fear. Even his own family did not escape these fits of fury ; and, like Henry VIII. of England, he was a real “Blue-Beard.” His beautiful wife Mariamne, her grandfather, her two sons Alexander and Aristobulus, and his eldest son Antipater, who had long been his favorite, all in turn fell victims to his rage ; and, just before he died, he caused many of the nobles of the land to be shut up together, and then gave an order that these should all be executed, so that at the time of his death there should be a general mourning in the chief families.¹

¹ For a full account of Herod, see Josephus, *Antiquities*, xv. and xvi.

This dreadful wretch was king when Jesus was born; and, as he had a great pride in keeping the kingdom in his own family, he was much troubled at the coming of the wise men to look up a child of whom Herod himself had no knowledge, but who, according to their reading of the prophets and of the stars, was born "to be the king of the Jews." As is apt to be the case with men who commit great crimes, Herod was very superstitious; and, though before the world he acted as if he had no fear of God or men, yet in his own conscience he was a great coward, and he was continually in dread of some punishment or calamity about to fall upon him. It is said, that, after he had murdered his wife, he gave orders to his servants always to speak of her as if she were yet alive, hoping in this way to rid himself of the horror of his crime. Knowing well how thoroughly the Jews hated his cruel reign, and knowing also the popular belief that the Messiah was soon to appear, Herod was afraid that a conspiracy would be formed against himself and his family, and that the new-born prince would be set up as the heir to the throne of David. The *Magi* being men of distinction in their own country, their coming so far and with such costly gifts, to worship the strange king, would bring the child into notice, and might raise a party in his favor: so Herod determined to find out where the child was, and to put him out of the way. But he hid his cruel purpose under a pretence of piety, and tried to use the *Magi* as his tools.

Gathering together the chief priests and the learned men of the Jews, Herod insisted that they should tell him where Christ should be born. They gave him for answer the words of the prophet Micah : “ And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Juda : for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.”¹ These words must have troubled him so much the more ; for if the child was already born, that should be the Ruler of Israel, there could be no hope of the kingdom remaining in his own family. To get rid of that child was now his one desire ; and he could have no peace till this was done. But Herod was cunning, as well as cruel ; and without betraying his feelings to the priests, lest some of them should be secret friends of the Messiah, he sent privately for the *Magi*, and tried to find out all about the star, and what they knew or thought about the new king. Then, pretending that he also wished to worship this wonderful child, he sent them to Bethlehem to search him out, and told them to come back, and let him know where he was to be found. This seemed a very natural request ; and, had the *Magi* brought back word to Herod, he would at once have caused the babe, and perhaps his parents also, to be put to death. But God, who had sent Jesus into the world, was watching over him ; and, as we have seen, the wise men were “ warned in a dream, that they should not return to

¹ Mic. v. 2.

Herod ;” and so “they departed into their own country another way.”¹

After waiting a while, and getting no news, Herod found out that the *Magi* had gone home without coming back to Jerusalem ; and this made him so angry that he determined to destroy all the male children under two years old that were in Bethlehem and the neighborhood. By this wholesale murder, he thought he should make sure of killing the little prince. Though Josephus does not speak of this order, it agrees perfectly with what he has told us of Herod’s character ; and, indeed, this might have seemed too small to mention, in a life so full of terrible crimes.

Happily, in so small a town as Bethlehem, the number of such children was small. But it was large enough to fill the place with “lamentation and weeping and great mourning ;”² for all the neighbors who had no children of their own would join in the grief of the parents whose little ones were butchered before their eyes.

But Herod was too late for his purpose of killing the Christ-child ; for Joseph, having been warned in a dream of the danger, was already far on the way to Egypt with Jesus and his mother. It probably took him two weeks to make the journey, trudging along by the side of a donkey upon which Mary rode with the child in her arms. At first they would travel rapidly, so as to get out of Palestine without

¹ Matt. ii. 12.

² Matt. ii. 18.

being pursued ; but, once in the desert, they would feel safe. The road led them directly south to Hebron, the same road over which Abraham had travelled when he went to offer up Isaac ; who was a type of this dear little lamb, now snatched from death, but which should one day be seized, and hung up on a cross with the mock title, “ Jesus, the king of the Jews.” It was the same road by which Abraham, and afterwards Jacob, went down into Egypt ; the same road along which David had been hunted by the jealous and bloodthirsty Saul ; the same road over which Elijah hurried toward the desert, as he fled from the wicked Ahab. And, no doubt, Joseph and Mary thought of all the good men who had suffered trials and sorrows along that very path, and by such memories strengthened their faith in the loving care of God for the child.

On reaching Hebron, they would follow the edge of the desert westward to Gaza, and then would strike through the desert in a south-westerly course, to Egypt. Here they would be likely to fall in with caravans ; for there were then large colonies of Jews living in Egypt, and there was much passing to and fro between them and their friends in Palestine. For their future safety, of course, Joseph and Mary would keep to themselves the wonderful story of their child, and the fact that they were fleeing from danger ; and they could pass unnoticed and unquestioned among the numbers of their countrymen in Egypt. It is very likely, too, that

they had friends who would receive them and care for them in a strange land. How long they remained in Egypt, we are not told, nor where they made their home. There is a legend that they took up their abode near the city of On, a little north of Cairo, where a very old sycamore-tree is still pointed out as the spot where they first halted ; and it is said that this tree, having been touched by the infant Jesus, yielded a healing balsam, and a spring of perpetual water opened at its side. Though we may not believe that any such thing happened to the tree, or that the tree itself is eighteen hundred years old, yet the story gives a beautiful picture of the blessings that come to any land which receives Christ into its bosom. Through the entering-in of his light and love, Nature itself takes on new forms of beauty and fruitfulness ; her very curse is turned to healing ; the forests teem with the incense of praise, and the deserts bubble with fountains of joy.

CHAPTER IX.

THE EARLY HOME OF JESUS.

SOON after Jesus was carried into Egypt, King Herod died. But in those days there were no newspapers, mails, nor telegraphs ; and Joseph, living in an obscure village in a strange country, might not have known of this event for a long time, had not an angel told him in a dream, that they were “ dead which sought the young child’s life,” at the same time saying to him, “ Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel.”¹ At first Joseph halted near the boundary-line, and there waited for further news ; for, though both his going to Egypt and his returning from Egypt were at the command of God, he was to use his own judgment as to times and ways, and not to depend upon dreams for every thing. It appears that he intended to return to Bethlehem, and make that his home. Mary would naturally wish to live near the spot where her child was born, and where so many wondrous things had befallen her. And this quiet, religious Jewish town would seem much more suitable for bringing up

¹ Matt. 19, 20.

such a child than the mixed, half-pagan village of Nazareth. She would feel at home in Bethlehem, for it was the home of her ancestors and of family connections; and as Joseph earned his living by his trade as carpenter, and lived in a very simple way, it was easy for him to remove from one town to another. Yet it did not seem prudent to go back to Bethlehem until something was known of the character of the new king.

The kingdom of Herod was divided, after his death, between his three sons. One of these, Archelaus, had the southern district of Palestine, viz., Judea; the middle district, viz., Samaria, being about two-thirds of the whole country; and, in addition to these, the region of Idumea, lying east and south of the Dead Sea. Another son, Herod Antipas, had the northern section of Palestine, or Galilee; and a region opposite to this, on the eastern side of Jordan, called Perea. And Philip, the third son, had a large district lying east of the Jordan, from the line of Lake Tiberias up to Mount Hermon and the neighborhood of Damascus. Archelaus, who ruled over Judea and Samaria, had much of his father's jealous and cruel disposition; and, as his right to his dominion was disputed, the beginning of his government was marked by violence and bloodshed. A rumor that the child, whom the *Magi* came to worship as king of the Jews, was yet alive, would of course have excited him to make a new attempt to destroy the life of Jesus. Hearing this,

Joseph gave up the idea of returning to Bethlehem, but “turned aside into the parts of Galilee,”¹ where the milder brother ruled. From Gaza he may have followed the coast up towards Mount Carmel, and there have struck inland, or have taken another of the great caravan routes through the interior of the country; or he may have avoided all cities and public roads, and made his way quietly along the by-paths; but at last he found himself safe in his old home at Nazareth. This was probably like most of the houses to be seen at Nazareth to-day, — a little square house of white stone, built upon the side of the hill, having at most two or three rooms, but with a flat or terraced roof, where in pleasant weather the family could sit together, and enjoy the lovely gardens and groves of the valley.

This valley of Nazareth is hidden among the hills that bound the northern edge of the great plain of Esdraelon. These hills of all shapes and sizes, and dotted here and there with trees and grain, swell out so as to form a pretty little basin about one mile long by a quarter of a mile broad, which is covered with fields of corn, gardens, and clumps of olive-trees. To the north-west is a hill much higher than the others, the side of which is marked by little ridges; and along these the houses stand in rows, one street above another, so that the village seems to be climbing up the hill upon which it is built.

¹ Matt. i. 22.

Down in the valley, upon an open space near the olive-trees, at a few minutes' walk from the northern corner of the village, is a beautiful spring, called "the Fountain of the Virgin," to which the women come at all hours of the day for water for their houses. No doubt Mary used often to come to this fountain, with her water-jar upon her shoulders, and her little boy at her side.

The fountain is the place at which the neighbors gather to talk over the news; and here Jesus played with other children of the village, while their mothers were resting at the spring. What childish pleasure he had in gathering the flowers of the valley, and in roaming among the trees and over the hills! When he grew old enough to enjoy Nature on a larger scale, he must often have gone to the top of the hill over the town, which rises nearly five hundred feet above the valley, for the lovely view of the sea, the mountains, and the plain, which now enchants the traveller like a dream of Paradise. Before one lies the great plain of Esdraelon, which stretches across the whole width of Palestine, from the Mediterranean to the Jordan; and in spring-time, when the grass is bright with flowers, and the grain is waving in the cultivated fields, this looks like a vast carpet of green, varied with figures of the most gorgeous patterns, laid down at the feet of the mountains; while the forests of oak, the groves of mock-orange, and the flowering shrubs and bushes along the hillsides, are like a fringe woven

around its edges. Looking to the north of west, one sees twenty miles distant the Bay of Akka; and the "great sea" beyond gleaming like a mirror, far, far away to where it seems to join the sky. Jutting over this bay is Carmel, rising right out of the Mediterranean, and stretching south-eastward for twelve miles, nearly in a straight line to the hills of Samaria. Following this line along toward the valley of the Jordan, the eye rests upon the "mountains of Gilboa,"¹ where Saul met his death; upon the "little Hermon," across which he went the night before, to see the witch of Endor;² a little to the north of this, and due east from Nazareth, Tabor, its round top looking like the dome of some great temple; still farther to the north, the hills that hide the Lake of Tiberias; and then the loftier mountains of Safed, nearly three thousand feet high; and "the city set upon the hill," so bright and shining, that, in that clear atmosphere, it can be seen for thirty miles; and, above and behind all these, the great peak of Hermon, with its snowy crown ten thousand feet above the sea. Such was the picture which Jesus could see from the hill above his home in Nazareth, either bright and glowing with the morning sunshine, or shaded and tinted with the evening twilight.

The home of his childhood was also a school of his mind and heart in the knowledge of nature, which appears in his

¹ 1 Sam. xxxi. 1.

² 1 Sam. xxviii. 7, 8.

discourses and parables: in the birds and the lilies; in the fig-tree and the vineyard; in the winds and clouds, and all the signs of weather; in the fields white for the harvest; in the thorns and tares; in the good ground and the wayside; in the fountains and the sea. But it was not only Nature that he learned to know. From these same hills there was spread out before him the panorama of the history of Palestine, and of the kingdom of God upon earth. Across the great plain of Esdraelon had passed the caravans from Arabia to Tyre, and from Damascus to Egypt; and among these the Midianites who bought Joseph from his brethren, and carried him away to the banks of the Nile. Beyond its southern ridges lay the twin mountains of Ebal and Gerizim, between which Joshua had gathered the children of Israel to hear the words of the law, and to swear allegiance to Jehovah. Over on that hill of Tabor, Deborah had rallied the troops of Israel against Sisera, whom they defeated by the River Kishon.

Yonder by the mountains of Gilboa, Gideon, with the sword of the Lord and his handful of chosen men, had put to flight the Midianites who had swarmed over from the desert like locusts; and by those same mountains the Philistines had defeated Saul. More than once the hosts of the Assyrians and of the Egyptians had swept across this plain in their marches against each other, or for the conquest of Israel; and in one of the battles of these foreign

powers the good King Josiah was slain. Along that coast, where the old cities of the Phœnicians, Tyre and Sidon, once stood in their glory, the floats of Hiram had passed, carrying the cedars of Lebanon to build the temple of Solomon at Jerusalem. Far up the plain was the site of Jezreel, where the wicked King Ahab had built his palace; and opposite was Carmel, where Elijah had called down upon the priests of Baal the fire of the Lord. So many chief events of the history of Israel, as well as so much of the beauty and grandeur of the land of Israel, were thus brought daily under the eye of Jesus as he grew up in his home at Nazareth. What a school for the mind and heart of the Great Teacher!

CHAPTER X.

THE FAMILY OF JESUS.

THOUGH Jesus had no earthly father, Joseph, who was married to his mother, and who knew how this child had been sent to her from heaven, loved him, and took care of him, as if he had been his own son. He carried him to Egypt, and there watched over his life; and, when he came back to Palestine, the good of the child was the one thing he thought of in choosing his home. For the comfort of Jesus and his mother, he would have returned to Bethlehem; but for their safety he settled down at Nazareth. Nothing is said of him after this, except that, when Jesus was twelve years old, he took him to Jerusalem to the great feast of the passover; but we are told that Joseph was a "just man," upright, kind, and good. He was known in the village as the carpenter; and the neighbors looked upon Jesus as his child, and spoke of him as "the son of Joseph,"¹ and "the carpenter's son."² This shows us that the family lived at Nazareth in a simple way, as plain working people; and that

¹ Luke iii. 23.

² Matt. xiii. 55.

Joseph and Mary did not try to set themselves up among the neighbors on account of their wonderful child, but kept to themselves all that had happened to him, and waited to see what would come of it. And as years went by, and nothing seemed to come of it, and no new wonder appeared, things settled down into a quiet family life ; and Jesus grew up simply as a lovely, beautiful, and obedient boy, subject to his parents, growing in knowledge as he grew in stature, and growing, too, in favor with God and men.¹

By and by other children were born into the family ; and these, too, were gifts of God and angels of blessing, though no one heard the angels singing when they came. These brothers and sisters, who grew up with Jesus, knew no difference between him and themselves ; and, though four "brothers of our Lord" finally became his disciples, so far were they from boasting of him, or putting him forward to make a name for the family, that at first they were slow to believe in him as the Messiah, and tried to hold him back from his public labors.²

So real and natural was the human life of Jesus, so different from the fables sometimes made up about wonderful men, that until he appeared in public as a divine Teacher, and a worker of miracles, his own brothers, much as they loved and trusted him, had no idea that he was any thing more than one of themselves.

¹ Luke i. 39, 40, 52.

² Mark iii. 21.



THE YOUTH OF JESUS.



But in that family circle there was one who always hoped and believed that some day Jesus would show that he was quite different from the other children, and, indeed, from all other men. Through all her fears for his life, through all the trials of poverty, through all the years of waiting, his mother kept hid in her heart the wonders of his birth, and the things said of him by the angels and the prophets. She was sure that something must come of all this; and she showed her confidence in him at Cana, where she was ready beforehand to believe in any thing that he might say or do.

Not only was Mary most favored and blessed among women, in being the mother of the Lord; but she was a woman of remarkable wisdom, and strength of character, as well as of deep and humble piety. She knew how to keep her heavenly secret from the curious and idle world; how to avoid the foolish gossip of the neighbors, and to preserve the love and confidence of her friends; how to feed her faith upon the hidden promises of God, and to wait without weariness or impatience for his time to fulfil them. She guarded and tended the infant Jesus with the joy of a mother's faith; she waited for her Messiah with the patience of a mother's hope; she watched his words and works with the pride of a mother's love; and she followed him to the cross with the courage and devotion that come only of a mother's agony.

And Jesus upon the cross, having shown his divine pity in forgiving his murderers, and his divine power and grace in opening Paradise to the penitent thief, just as he began to feel the horror of being forsaken by his Father, turned all the love of his human heart upon his mother, and told his best and dearest friend, the true and loving John, to take her to his home, and be to her as a son.¹

¹ John xix. 26, 27.

CHAPTER XI.

JESUS AT SCHOOL.

WHEN he was six years old, Jesus was sent to school. As soon as he could understand any thing, his mother, in her own sweet, gentle way, had talked to him about the love of God; had told him the stories of Abraham and Isaac, of Jacob and Joseph, of Moses and of Samuel; and had taught him to sing the Psalms of David. But, from what we know of her prudence and patience, we may well doubt whether she gave him any idea of what the angel had told the shepherds about him when he was born, and what Simeon had said of him when she carried him to the temple. Mary was more inclined to wait, and see what would come of these things, than to talk about them; and more willing to trust to God to teach and lead her child, than to feed his mind and her own with wonders. As Jesus grew older, Joseph taught him the history of the Jews, and the meaning of the sacrifices and the festivals, and other chief things in the laws of Moses. By those laws all parents were required

to teach their children the commandments of God, and to give them lessons from the Bible, not only on the sabbath, but every day, at morning and evening. Even when walking together, parents were to give their children useful knowledge "by the way."¹ It came to be a saying among the people, "Blessed is the son who has learned from his father, and blessed is the father who has instructed his son."²

It was also the custom of all good Jews to send their children to school, to learn what they could not so well be taught at home. And it was a saying of their wise men, that "The world is preserved by the breath of the school-children;" and, "A town in which there is no school must perish." It is said, that, "eighty years before Christ, schools flourished throughout the length and breadth of the land." These schools were free, and were for all alike. Education was taken up as a national work; and laws were passed fixing the location and the form of school-buildings, the number of children to one teacher, the age of pupils, and the duty of parents in preparing their children for school, and in watching over their studies. By much effort a law was passed making education compulsory; but at first this law did not apply to Galilee:³ yet Galilee had its village-schools, which were open to all.

¹ Deut. vi. 7.

² Literary Remains of Emanuel Deutsch, p. 24.

³ Emanuel Deutsch: Literary Remains, pp. 23, 139, 140.



We know that Jesus could read and write ; and we may well suppose, that, at the usual age, he was sent to school with the other children of the village. This school at Nazareth was not like the high schools in our great cities, or the academies in our large towns and villages, where children are taught a little of almost every thing ; but it was a sort of parish-school, kept by an officer of the synagogue ; and the children were taught to read, to write, and to cipher, and were made to learn by heart the Bible history, and the Psalms that were used in public worship. Besides this, they had lessons in the meaning of the sacred law, and in the moral duties of life. In Judea there were higher schools, in which languages, mathematics, astronomy, history, natural history, grammar, law, and ethics were studied ; but at Nazareth there was probably nothing more than the village-school in its simplest form.

It would amuse children nowadays to see such a school as that to which Jesus was sent. The teacher wore a turban, and a long robe, or gown, fastened with a girdle around his waist. He sat upon a cushion, with his legs crossed under him, like a tailor sitting on his bench ; and the children sat cross-legged in a circle, upon cushions on the floor. They had no desks, but held their books, or scrolls, in their hands ; and whatever the teacher told them they would repeat together after him at the top of their voices. One can see just such schools now in Egypt and Syria.

Besides these village-schools, and the graded schools spoken of above, there were in the large cities schools, or seminaries, called colleges, where the most learned scribes and doctors gave lectures, and held discussions, upon points of Jewish law and theology. It was in such a school, at Jerusalem, that Paul was brought up "at the feet of Gamaliel," one of the most famous among Jewish teachers. But there is no reason to suppose that Jesus ever went to any other than the little parish-school at Nazareth. Indeed, when he began to preach, his townsmen wondered how he could know so much; for he had grown up among them as the son of a poor man, and had never been away to study at any of the colleges in the cities. And once, when he was teaching in the temple at Jerusalem, the Jews were so much astonished at his wisdom, that they said, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" By "letters," they meant not simple reading or writing, but learning, or knowledge; and, as they knew that Jesus had never been to school to any of the great rabbis at Jerusalem, they wondered how he was able to speak so wisely and so well. Paul had studied both Greek and Hebrew learning;¹ and he sometimes quoted the sayings of poets and wise men among the Greeks.² But Jesus never speaks of any of

¹ The Talmud shows, that, in the colleges, Coptic, Aramaic, Persian, Median, and Latin were studied; but Greek was the favorite language.

² Acts xvii. 28.

the great teachers who had lived in other countries, and never quotes from any book but the Old Testament, and the comments which the Jewish rabbis had made upon their law,—“the traditions of the elders.” This fact is important, as showing the sources of his knowledge. As Jesus does quote from the standard books of Jewish history, theology, and literature, it is fair to suppose, that, like Paul, he would have quoted from the sages of other nations had he been acquainted with their sayings, or had he borrowed any thing of their words or their ideas. Jesus left nothing of his own in a written form; and, from his parables and discourses which have come down to us, it is plain that he had nothing of what is called book-learning, and did not get his wisdom from what other men had said or written. Probably he had never heard of Plato, much less of Confucius, though some of his sayings resemble somewhat the sayings of those philosophers.

But, as we have already seen, Jesus could find in the hills and valleys, in the trees and flowers, in the sea and the sky, as these were spread out before him at Nazareth, a great book in which to study the works of God, a day-school and a night-school, which always gave him new lessons of wisdom, of power, of beauty, and of love.

And there was another school at Nazareth to which Jesus went,—the school of work. Among the Jews it was the

custom in every family, that the boys should learn a trade; and, indeed, parents were required to bring up their sons to some kind of work. The Apostle Paul was a tent-maker; and, during his long stay at Corinth, he earned his living by working with his own hands. Among the chief Jewish rabbis, their great teachers, one was known as "the shoe-maker," another as "the weaver," and another as "the carpenter." As a matter of course, Jesus would be brought up to the trade of his father Joseph; and, in fact, he was not only known as "the carpenter's son," but was himself spoken of as "the carpenter."¹ His having a trade was no disgrace among the Jews, nor was this in itself a mark of his lowliness. But by thus living a life of poverty and of toil, earning his daily bread, he learned how to sympathize with the poor; and by his example he taught us how to turn into a blessing the labor which sin had made a curse.

This was one of the ways in which Jesus was a Saviour. He redeemed our common, every-day work from drudgery and disgrace, by making it a service of his Father in heaven. He was doing the will of his heavenly Father while working in the shop of his earthly father, no less than when working miracles of mercy, and preaching the gospel of salvation. The thirty years which he spent so quietly at Nazareth were as really a part of his heavenly mission as were the three years of his public ministry. And to follow Christ, and serve

¹ Mark ii. 3.

God, it is not necessary that we should have some great thing to say or to do before the world; but by being true and kind and faithful and good, just where we are placed in life, we can make our daily work a daily worship, the humblest home a temple for the service of God, and the hardest life a school for training our souls for heaven. It was a boast of the Jewish commonwealth, as it is a boast of modern democracies, that "labor is honorable;" but Jesus has taught us that it is both sacred and blessed.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHILD LOST AND FOUND.

THE quiet home and school life of Jesus at Nazareth was broken only by one incident of a public nature, which has come down to us. Every Jew who was able to make the journey was bound by the law to go to Jerusalem once a year, to keep the festival of the Passover, which lasted seven days.¹ When a boy was twelve years old, he was called a "son of the law," and was expected to attend the great religious festivals in company with his parents. So, too, at a certain age the children of Roman citizens were clothed with a garment of a certain form and color, — the *toga prætexta*, — as a sign that they were free-born, and were members of the Roman commonwealth.

The parents of Jesus were strict in the duties of their religion; and hence "they went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover."² And, when Jesus was twelve years old, they took him with them. At such times Jerusalem was crowded to excess: every family in the city opened its doors

¹ Deut. xxvii. 7; Neh. viii. 9-12.

² Luke ii. 41.



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not only to friends, but to strangers; and yet, for want of room in the houses, many visitors were obliged to sleep in tents, so that the suburbs of the city had the appearance of a great camp-meeting. The people from the country came up to the feast in caravans; all the neighbors in a village, and sometimes all the inhabitants of a district, would arrange to travel in one company, because this was so much safer and cheaper than to go alone. They enlivened the way with the songs of Zion, "turning the valley of Baca into a well."¹ The greater part would go on foot; others, upon asses, horses, or camels, which were also used to carry the tents, baggage, and provisions. Of course, such a large body would move slowly, and could not go many miles in a day; and it had to march with something of the order of an army. It is the custom in the East, for a caravan to begin its journey about noon, and to go only one or two hours — say four or five miles — the first day; halting early so as to make sure that nothing is missing, and that every thing is in order for the march.

At the close of the feast, everybody was in a hurry to start for home; and Joseph and Mary joined a large caravan for Galilee. As they were busy getting their things together, they did not miss Jesus until they had started; and then they supposed, of course, that he was somewhere in the caravan, and they should find him at the end of the day's journey,

¹ Ps. lxxxiv. 6.

which would so soon be over. Jesus was such a thoughtful, gentle, and obedient boy, and there were so many relatives and acquaintances from Nazareth in the party, that his parents did not once think of any harm to him, until after a couple of hours the caravan came to a halt, and they hunted for him among their friends, and could not find him. There was but one thing for them to do, and that was to hurry back to Jerusalem; and so they turned about with fear and sorrow, searching for him along the wayside, in the streets of the city, at the quarters they had just left, and wherever they remembered to have taken him, or thought it possible that he could have wandered. They asked everybody they met, but no one had seen their boy; they enlisted friends to help them in their search, but nobody brought them any tidings. The city was still very crowded; the streets were full of confusion and hurry from the breaking-up of the feast; and every hour added to their fear that some evil had happened to their child. Mary was so troubled that she could neither eat nor sleep. She never before knew how much she loved her boy. Could it be that the angels had forgotten him, and would leave him to some dreadful fate? Had he been saved from the cruel Herod, by that long flight into Egypt, only now to be crushed to death in the crowd, or to be stolen by one of the robber bands that hung around the city, and carried off where she should never hear of him again? Was this the "sword" that good old Simeon had

told her should pierce her soul? Ah, how sudden was the stroke, and how sharp the pain!

Two days were passed in this terrible suspense. The boy was lost, and no trace of him could be found. The friends with whom he had staid in Jerusalem supposed that he had started with his parents. He had told no one where he was going; and he had not come back to eat or sleep at their house. There were no such arrangements in Jerusalem as now exist in large cities, for finding lost children by the help of the newspapers and the police; and every moment of delay made it less and less likely that they should get any tidings of the boy. But through all the weary hours there was something deep in Mary's heart that told her she should find him, that he had been sent into the world for some great good, and no evil should befall him; and, though broken down with sorrow, she kept on seeking.

But where was Jesus all this while? Searching for his parents? Or, learning that they had started for home, was he trying to find some new party with which to go to Nazareth? Or was he wandering about to see the strange sights of the city, so filled with a child's wonder that he did not realize he was alone and lost? No. It was not carelessness, nor curiosity, that had kept him back, but the love of knowledge. For he had found a new school, where he could go and sit by the hour, and hear wise men talk, and ask questions for himself. Around the temple, in what

was called the outer court, were cloisters open on the inner side, but roofed over for protection against the weather. These cloisters were divided into halls of various sizes; and here the great Jewish rabbis, or teachers, would give instruction to all who chose to hear. The mode of teaching was much like that which Socrates used with the youth of Athens. The teacher would give a short lecture upon some subject, and then ask questions about it, or answer the questions that were put to him. Sometimes he would begin by asking a question; and this would lead to a conversation or discussion in which all present might take part. Here a scholar could sit a whole day, talking with one teacher and another; and, in the warm weather, could even sleep in the porch over night, as people in Palestine were accustomed in summer to sleep in the open air.¹ There was nothing strange in a boy twelve years old being among the learners at these meetings in the temple-porch, and nothing forward in his asking questions. Indeed, a teacher would be very likely to put questions to a bright-looking boy standing by, to find out how much he had learned at home and at school. From the dialogues of Plato, we learn that Socrates often began his discussions of philosophy and morals by asking questions of a youth. A boy brought up according to the rules of the wise men was taught Bible

¹ At Joppa, one warm night, my host sent me to sleep on the flat roof of the house, as the most comfortable place.

lessons and Jewish history at school from six years old to ten; then he began to study the books which the learned doctors had written upon the Jewish law. At twelve he was thought to be old enough to come to the temple-service, and take part in the duties of a Jew, and also to study the hard questions which were discussed by the rabbis. And there was Jesus in the temple, sitting in the midst of these great teachers of the law, "hearing them, and asking them questions."¹ He was just at that age when a well-bred and well-behaved boy is neither too forward nor too bashful, — gentle and respectful in his manners, but eager to learn, and pleased at being talked to by persons to whom he looks up as so much older and wiser than himself.

The answers which Jesus gave to the questions of the rabbis were so wise and deep that all that heard him were astonished at his understanding. By degrees quite a crowd drew together to the hall where this conversation was going on, and stood waiting to see whether the young stranger would not be puzzled by some hard questions, or to hear what bright questions he would next put to the rabbis. Just at this moment his parents, tired and sad with their fruitless search, came in at that side of the temple, and, seeing the crowd, went up, and found their boy. "They were amazed;" for they had no thought of finding him in the temple, but had come in hope of meeting some friend

¹ Luke ii. 46.

who had seen him, and to pray that God would guide them to their lost child. His mother did not stop to take in what was going on around her, nor to feel a pride in the admiration of others for her son: she took no notice of the crowd of strangers, or of the learned doctors. All the grief that for two days had been swelling in her heart now burst forth in a cry of reproof, which yet was not anger, but the anguish of love. Her sorrow must have vent before she could give place to her sudden joy. "Son," she said, "why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing."¹

Now, Jesus had no thought of neglecting his parents. He had not disobeyed them, nor run away from them: only he had been so fascinated with talking with these learned men, that he had not thought of home nor of any thing else. A Jewish boy was brought up to reverence his teachers. It was a saying, "You should revere the teacher even more than your father. Your father only brought you into this world: the teacher shows the way into the next." But, besides this thirst for knowledge, a new, strange feeling had begun to stir within his soul, drawing him toward God as his Father, whom above all others he must love, obey, and serve. What he had learned from his mother's lips and in his infant prayers, what had seemed to him so near in God's talking with Abraham and Moses, what he had so

¹ Luke ii. 40.

often thought and dreamed about with a childish wonder, as he sat upon the hill-top at Nazareth, or strolled alone in the woods, now came to him as *real*, — that he was “the Son of God,” and must follow the voice of his Father in heaven. He had been taught at home to look upon Joseph as his father; and his mother had just said, “Thy father and I have sought thee:” but he felt a drawing of his heart toward God, so near, so close, that he spoke of God as his real, his only father; and the consciousness of this relation with heaven must guide and rule his life on earth. What God delights in is truth and love and goodness among men; and, young as he was, Jesus felt that he must be doing in the world that which God delights in, must make a beginning by speaking of and seeking after holy things in his Father’s house, “must be about his Father’s business.”¹

Since the wonders at Bethlehem, so long a time had passed in the quiet, every-day life at Nazareth, that the parents of Jesus could not understand the full, deep meaning of what he now said. But it was not said for the purpose of throwing off their authority. There was no pride in the heart of this loving boy, who had been so admired by the rabbis. Our Father in heaven has taught us to love and honor him in loving and honoring our earthly parents. And so Jesus at once left the new school in the temple, that had so much charmed him, and the people who

¹ Luke ii. 49.

were so ready to praise him, and went back to the little home at Nazareth with his parents, and there "was subject unto them,"¹ living with them in all the loving devotion of a child. Yet all the while his soul grew with the consciousness of his new life, so that every one remarked how he increased in wisdom and in grace as he grew in years.

Mary forgot nothing that happened to Jesus, and nothing that was said to her about him. She kept all in her heart; but, now that her wonder and hope were so awakened by this scene in the temple, she must keep on waiting in silent faith. The divine life had blossomed in her son: she must wait almost twenty years for the perfect fruit.

¹ Luke ii. 51.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS.

FAR up in the north-eastern corner of the Holy Land, fed by the snows on the summit of the great Mount Hermon, and by rivulets and fountains from all sides of the valleys round about, rises the famous river of the Bible, the Jordan, which makes its way through marshes, lakes, and gorges of the mountains, till it is lost in the Dead Sea. The river is winding and full of rapids, so that it cannot be used by boats; and though in some parts its valley is rich and productive, in others it is wild and barren, or the banks are lined with cane-brakes which are the home of beasts of prey. But though of no use for commerce, and now but little used for agriculture, the Jordan is celebrated as a sacred river. To the Jews it marked the boundary between the desert and the promised land; and to the Christian it is a sign of the river of death, that divides him from his heavenly home. Abraham and Jacob crossed the Jordan in their pilgrimages; Joshua and Elijah divided its stream by a miracle; in its waters Jesus was baptized; and its chief lake

was the scene of many of his discourses and of his mighty works.

But how came Jesus to be baptized in this river, or to be baptized at all at the age of thirty, when in his infancy he had been consecrated to God by all the forms required in the law? The Jews had certain ceremonies in which water was sprinkled upon persons or things as a sign of religious cleansing. Thus, when the Levites were set apart to their office, the "water of purifying" was sprinkled upon them, to make them clean.¹

So, when one had touched a dead body, he was regarded as unclean, or unfit to take part in the sacrifices, until he was sprinkled with "the water of separation," which was also called "a purification for sin."² In later times the scribes and Pharisees added very much to these uses of water for sacred ceremonies. They gave a religious meaning to the washing of cups and pots, of brazen vessels, and of tables, or the couches upon which they reclined at their meals;³ and they insisted that foreigners who embraced the Jewish religion should be baptized. It seems also to have been a custom for a great prophet or a reformer to baptize his followers as a sign that they received his teachings, and meant to put away their sins and begin a new life. Such a

¹ Num. viii. 7. This was literally called "sin-water;" that is, water used as a sign of washing away sin, and thus making fit for the sacred office of Levite.

² Num. xix. 9, 13, 17, 18.

³ Mark vii. 4, 8.

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JOHN PREACHING IN THE WILDERNESS.

prophet and reformer was John the Baptist, whose father was a priest by the name of Zacharias, and whose mother was Elisabeth, the cousin of Mary the mother of Jesus. This John had been brought up very strictly according to the sect of the Nazarites, who never tasted wine nor strong drink, never had their hair cut, and never mingled in the pleasures of social life.¹ He was born in a village of Judea, upon the border of the wilderness; and he seems to have grown up a good deal like a hermit, spending much of his time in the desert, in meditation and prayer.² This wilderness was not a great waste of sand, but a region of rocks and mountains, lying along the western side of the Dead Sea, where there was too little soil and water for farming; but good pasture was to be found at certain seasons in the valleys. There were few villages or settlements in this region; but the number of people employed in taking care of flocks was large enough to cause quite a stir in the land when John first appeared among them as a prophet; and their reports of his preaching reached Jerusalem, and drew crowds from the city to hear him. John had the dress and the manners of one of the old prophets. He wore a long robe woven of camel's hair, which was fastened about his waist with a girdle of leather; and he lived upon the honey which he gathered from the hives of wild bees in the rocks and trees, and upon locusts such as at this day are cooked and eaten by the Arabs in the same region.

¹ Num. vi.² Luke i. 80.

At that time there was a general feeling that the Messiah was soon to appear; and as it was also predicted that a prophet like Elijah should go before him, when John began to preach that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and to call upon the people to repent, his bold and earnest manner, and his strong and faithful words, led many to believe that he was the prophet Elijah come again from heaven: indeed, not a few imagined that he must be the Christ. But John himself told the people that Christ was yet to come, that he would soon appear, and would search their hearts and lives, even as the wind sweeps over the threshing-floor, and sifts out the straw from the wheat; even as the fire burns up the chaff when the wind has thus blown it away.¹

The Jews were hoping for a Messiah who should be a great king and warrior, who should drive the Romans out of the land, and make their own nation free and rich and powerful: but John taught that Christ would come to cast out the sins of the people, and to set up the kingdom of heaven in their hearts; to search for the true friends of God, who by their faith and piety showed themselves the children of Abraham; and that they must prepare for his coming by repenting of their sins, and leading good lives, honest, true, faithful, and kind to the poor.² Preaching in this manner, John went from place to place, until he came to

¹ Matt. iii. 11, 12.

² Mark i. 4.

the River Jordan at a point not far from the city of Jericho. Great crowds had followed him all along the way, and new people came also from the eastern side of Jordan; for at this point the river was so shallow that it could commonly be crossed on foot by a ford. Here many confessed their sins, and were baptized. But though John had gathered such a multitude of disciples, and was looked up to as a reformer, he did not once attempt to turn the popular excitement to his own account, but refused the titles and honors that the people were ready to bestow upon him, saying, "There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose. I indeed have baptized you with water; but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost."¹ It was the duty of a servant, when a guest arrived at the door of the house, to take off his sandals, and wipe off the dust from his feet; but such was the reverence of John for the Messiah, that he felt himself unworthy even to touch his sacred person in the humblest task of a servant.

After preaching in Judea, and baptizing at the lower ford, John crossed the Jordan, and went up toward Galilee, in the neighborhood of the ford where Jacob had passed over the river with his family. At this point, Jesus came to him to be baptized. Though John and Jesus were cousins, they had lived far apart, each in his own quiet

¹ Mark i. 7, 8.

way, and, it would seem, had never before met ; or, if John had already met Jesus personally, he had not seen in him any thing that answered to his own notion of the Messiah. Yet doubtless his mother had told him of the wonderful things that had happened to the mother of Jesus before and after his birth ; and now, when he saw his cousin approaching, the feeling that this was indeed the Messiah became so clear and strong, that John at first declined to baptize him ; desiring, rather, to receive a blessing from Jesus. But Jesus was careful to comply with all good religious customs ; and, since the baptism of John was the mark of a holy reformation, he insisted upon being baptized as an open sign of consecration to his new work. As Jesus went up out of the river, a dove that seemed to come from the very depths of heaven hovered over him, and alighted upon his head ; and John, who stood wondering at this beautiful sight, heard a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."¹ And then he perceived that the Holy Ghost had chosen this gentle bird as a sign of his own peace and purity and grace that should consecrate the head of Jesus, and fill his ministry with the presence and power of the Spirit of God.

After such a sign, John felt sure that Jesus was the promised Messiah ; but the words in which he declared this must have sounded strangely to the crowds that he

¹ Matt. iii. 17 ; Mark i. 10, 11 ; Luke iii. 21, 22 ; John i. 32.

had warned to make ready for the kingdom of heaven. Here was the Messiah of the prophets; here was the son of David, anointed by the Holy Ghost; here was the Lord from heaven in the likeness of the Son of man, as Daniel and Ezekiel had seen him in their visions; here was the Son of God. All this was now clear to John. Yet, in pointing out Jesus as the Christ, he did not say, "This is the conqueror who shall deliver Israel;" "This is the king who shall restore the throne of David:" but, in words as gentle as the voice of the dove, this stern prophet of the wilderness now said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"¹ Like the promise of the angel to Mary, like the announcement of the angels to the shepherds, like the prophecy of Simeon in the temple, these words of John marked Jesus as the Saviour of the world, the Saviour through the sacrifice of himself, even as the lamb was daily sacrificed in the temple. John could rebuke sin; but Jesus would redeem from sin. John could say, "Repent, and flee from the wrath to come:" Jesus would say, "Believe, and be saved." And the most gentle creatures that God has made, the dove and the lamb, were the symbols of that ministry of mercy that should draw a sinful world into the kingdom of love, which is the kingdom of heaven.

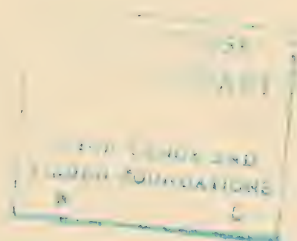
¹ John i. 29.

CHAPTER XIV.

JESUS IN THE DESERT.

JESUS was about to go forth into the world as the teacher of truth ; but, to know the reality of truth, one must have wrestled with doubt. Jesus was to lead men to faith in God ; but, to know the strength of faith, one must have known the weakness of fear. Jesus was to recover men from sin ; but, to know the power of virtue, one must have felt the power of temptation. And just such a trial of his own faith in the word and the Spirit of God, and of his power to resist evil, came to Jesus before he appeared in public as the Messiah. That divine Spirit, which at his baptism had consecrated him as the Son of God, now moved him to go into the wilderness, and stay there alone until God should show him how to begin his work.

The same wild, broken, thinly-peopled country which forms "the wilderness of Judea," on the western side of the Dead Sea, extends north of Jericho, along the valley of the Jordan, and is there marked by barren and rugged mountains of white limestone. One of these, north-west





JESUS IN THE DESERT.

of Jericho, to the left of the road in going down from Jerusalem, a steep mountain which rises some fifteen hundred feet above the plain, has been fixed upon by some as the place to which Jesus now went; and, in reference to his fast of forty days, it is called *Quarantania*. Of course we cannot know the very spot in the wilderness at which this scene of his life took place; but it was certainly in that lone and dreary region along the valley of the Lower Jordan. Mark says that he was "with the wild beasts;" in a place remote from the dwellings of men, and where the wildness and loneliness of nature were broken only by the roaring of beasts of prey. Here he was exposed to physical perils and fears, without the comfort of human sympathy. As he heard the beasts prowling around the cave in which he slept, he must have known that most painful feeling of loneliness and danger by night.

Yet Jesus was so absorbed with spiritual things, so taken up with prayer and with thoughts of God and of his new work, that he was not lonesome, and hardly felt the want of natural food. There are cases on record of persons who have gone for more than forty days without eating or drinking;¹ and we know that a great sorrow or a great joy, or any strong excitement of the nerves, will cause one to forget his bodily wants. Indeed, we hardly know the full power of will or spirit over the body, either to subdue or

¹ See note at the end of this chapter.

to sustain it. It was certainly possible for Jesus to have been so lifted up and strengthened by his spiritual feelings and desires, that through all these days he literally "did eat nothing."¹ But the story does not require us to take this literally; for it is said of John that "he came neither eating nor drinking:"² he did not depend, like other men, upon regular food, but "lived upon locusts and wild honey" that he picked up in the wilderness. And so this fasting of Jesus may mean only that he lived without regular and sufficient food, picking up such roots and berries as he might find in the wilderness, never tasting bread or meat for forty days.³ This would answer to the idea of fasting as often given in the Bible, and to the word used by Matthew. But, if we take Luke's words to mean that he really did eat nothing at all, then we may fall back upon the power of the spirit, when in a state of ecstasy, to hold in check the appetites of the body, so that these hardly come into mind.

It is, of course, easy to say that this fasting of Jesus was a miracle; that he was kept alive without food, by the special power of God. But the Evangelists do not speak of the fasting as a miracle; and why should we? Here is a case for the caution given in Chapter VII., — not to invent a miracle to explain a difficulty, when the Bible itself does

¹ Luke iv. 2.

² Matt. xi. 18.

³ *Forty* is often used in the Bible as a round number; as we now say "a dozen," or "twenty."

not present the fact as supernatural. This would tend to lessen the authority of real miracles, when the Bible does set these before us to command our faith. Now, the Bible gives us good reasons for not supposing that the fasting of Jesus was a miracle. Matthew and Mark say that "angels ministered unto him;" but this was not till after he had fasted for forty days, and had resisted the Tempter alone, and in the faintness of his hunger. The Apostle Paul teaches that "in all things" Jesus was "made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest,"—might have a real and tender sympathy with us; "for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted."¹ Now, Jesus was not like us, did not feel as we do, did not suffer as we do, if in his temptation he was all the while kept up by miraculous power. We have no such power given nor promised to us to resist hunger, or any other form of trial or suffering; and therefore what Jesus did by miracle could give no example nor aid to us who cannot hope for miracles in our behalf. If this scene in the wilderness was all a miracle, we could look upon it with wonder and reverence; but we could not look to it for help and strength. But we can look to the Spirit of God to help us to overcome weakness, temptation, and evil; and if, in his great temptation, Jesus is set before us truly, as a man fighting with the Devil by this same help

¹ Heb. ii. 17, 18.

of the Spirit of God, then we can look to him for sympathy and aid. And this, again, is what Paul teaches: "for we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted *like as we are*, yet without sin."¹ At the first, the mind of Jesus was so filled with what he was to do in the world, and with the feeling that he was the Son of God, that even the want of bodily food was forgotten, as in a dream, when the spirit seems to move and act without the body. The warmth of the climate in the dry season made it safe for him to sleep in the open air: yet he had no bed but the naked rock, or the hard floor of some mountain cave, with a stone for his pillow.

After thirty years of waiting in his humble home, Jesus felt that the time had come for him to show himself as the teacher and the Saviour of the world. We remember, that, at the age of twelve, the feeling that he was the Son of God was so strong in him that he then wanted to "be about his Father's business." From that time he had lived quietly in Joseph's shop and at Mary's side, waiting for the day when he should begin in public the great work for which he knew he had been sent into the world; but, now that the Spirit had declared him to be "the Son of God," he felt that he must enter in earnest upon his Father's business, and make it his meat and his drink to do the will of Him that

¹ Heb. iv. 15.

sent him.¹ But *how* to begin was the question. We have seen what a fever the people were in about the Messiah ; how they were running after John the Baptist, expecting that he would turn out to be the Christ ; and we know that the Jews were ready for any leader who should promise to drive out the Romans from their country, and to set up the kingdom of Israel.

To raise the old flag of Judah as the true heir to the throne of David ; to take advantage of the restless feeling of the times ; to bring forward the signs and wonders of his birth and calling, and the prophecies of his kingdom ; to draw a crowd of followers, to drill them in the wilderness, and then lead them up to take Jerusalem from the Romans,—all this would have been just what the people were looking for, and would have liked, in their Messiah ; and this might have been done suddenly with some show of success. No doubt Jesus thought of this while schooling himself in the desert to the slow and patient work of founding a kingdom of truth and love by preaching and by suffering. The very air was full of suggestions and occasions for one who felt himself to be the Messiah to make himself king. And, while every thing was ripe for such a move, the Devil tried to tempt Jesus to make a bold stroke for the favor of the people, by showing off his power as “the Son of God.”

¹ John iv. 34.

First the Tempter assailed him through hunger, which, after so many days of suspense, now suddenly seized upon him with terrible pangs. Men who have suffered hunger in the desert, or by shipwreck, or in times of famine, say that the craving after food is as if some living creature was gnawing at the stomach ; and at last this makes the sufferer as fierce as a tiger to devour any thing that may come in his way. In the siege of Paris, in 1871, dogs, cats, rats, were eaten by the starving people ; in the famine in Persia, in 1872, not only these, but toads and serpents, and even corpses, were devoured ; and, in the siege of Jerusalem under Titus, it is said that mothers ate the dead bodies of their children. As Jesus, famishing for bread, hunted among the rocks for something to stay the craving of his stomach, or, fainting from weakness, lay down upon the bare ground, ready to die of hunger, the Tempter put these thoughts into his head : “Are you not the Son of God ? Have you not felt this since you were twelve years old ? And, on the day of your baptism, did not a voice from heaven declare this to you and John ? Why should the Son of God die of hunger ? Has he not power over every thing in the world ? Can he not work a miracle to save his life ? Or is there, after all, a mistake ? How easy it would be to prove what has been said ! If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” Thus did Satan work upon the feelings of Jesus, as he lay there weak, weary, suffering, helpless with hunger.

But, if Jesus was the Son of God, he had come into the world to live as a man, and to show men how to live; and the first duty of a son was obedience to his father. He remembered how it is written in the Scriptures, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." To make food for himself by working a miracle, would be to distrust the providence of God in caring for him as a weak and needy man. Other men could not turn stones into bread to save themselves from starving; and, if he would be the teacher and leader of men, then as a man Jesus must stand in his lot, and show an example of patience under suffering. Besides, to satisfy our bodily wants, is not the chief thing for which we should live. The wants of the mind and of the soul are far higher and nobler; and though the body must be rightly cared for, and kept in health, and we must eat and drink and sleep if we would be in the best condition to think, or even to pray, yet we must learn to subdue the most pressing wants of nature to what seems to be our duty to God, and so make it our meat and drink to do the will of our Father in heaven. Thus Jesus taught us that to suffer hunger, and meekly to wait for God to send relief, looking to our Father to give us our daily bread, was far better than to set up our own pride or self-will in relieving ourselves without looking to God, and by a selfish use of means and powers given for quite another purpose.

The Tempter now put it into the mind of Jesus to show himself as the Son of God by making a display of his power before the crowds who were always gathered around the temple at Jerusalem. The people were expecting their Messiah to appear in some strange and startling way, and were looking for "a sign from heaven." What if he should go and plant himself upon the highest point of the temple,—where he must soon draw the notice of crowds in the courts of the building and in the streets of the city,—and then, while all were gazing, should suddenly sail down among them through the air! Had not God said, "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone"?¹ and could he not trust such a promise in the very act of showing the people that the Son of God had come to set up his kingdom? What a sensation such an appearance would make! How immediate would be its effect in rallying the people around the standard of their new king! Yes: but this would be a kingdom of outward show, not of inward spiritual power; men would run after Jesus with proud huzzas, instead of following him with humble hearts; they would be looking after wonders, instead of mending their ways. God had not sent him to set up such a kingdom; and though he could trust God to protect him in any danger, to deliver

¹ Ps. xci. 11, 12.

him in any trouble, it was also written, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."¹ We may not presume upon God's taking care of us when we rush into danger without cause, or for the sake of showing how far we can venture upon providence. A bridge built by the laws that God has written in nature will bear a railway train safe across the chasm of Niagara; but, if Blondin chooses blindfold to drive a wheelbarrow across on a single wire, he must not look for the hand of God to lead him, and keep him from tumbling into the abyss. We can trust God to take care of us in doing whatever he fairly requires us to do, though this be to stand in a furnace of fire, or to lie down in a den of lions; but we may not take upon ourselves to violate the laws of God, even for making a show of our confidence in him, and then expect him to reach forth his hand, and save us from the consequences of our temerity. So Jesus taught us to do nothing rashly, even in God's name; but to seek to do God's will in God's own way. It is the golden motto of faith, *Thou shalt always trust, but never tempt, the Lord thy God.*

It takes hard knocks to drive the Devil away. He had kept back his best card; and, though twice repelled, he grew the more presumptuous, or perhaps the more desperate. From the higher points of the wilderness in which Jesus then was, he could look eastward toward the seat of those

¹ Deut. vi. 16.

great empires, which under the names of Assyria, Babylon, Parthians, and Medes, had filled so large a space in the history of the world ; southward, where Arabia and Egypt, by letters, science, wealth, and dominion, had made themselves a lasting name ; westward, where the land of Palestine, then a province of Rome, would remind him how that empire was stretching its all-conquering, all-grasping arms across every sea, to every land. And now there came to him the thought of a world-wide empire, more vast and splendid than Alexander had dreamed of owning, and had died in winning. But here Satan unmasked his character and purpose. Himself the god of ambition, the ambitious must serve him ; himself the god of this world, those who seek worldly power and grandeur must pay homage to him ; and, as the vision of "all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them" passed before the imagination of Jesus, Satan said, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."¹ Jesus saw that such thoughts were of the Devil ; though his own eye or imagination was the screen on which they were painted, the drawing, the coloring, were from the hand of the Tempter. To possess such an empire, to wield such power, to have such a name ! Ah, but this would be to abandon the very kingdom of God which he had been sent to establish. Filled with holy anger, Jesus turned upon the Tempter, and said, "Get thee

¹ Matt. iv. 9.

hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." And the Devil left him.

How the Devil came and went, Jesus did not tell his disciples, when he gave them the story of his temptation; or at least the Evangelists are silent about it.

The Bible teaches that there is a real, living spirit of evil, of vast powers of mischief, called Satan, the Devil, the Tempter, the "Father of lies." It represents him as able to act upon the minds of men, by suggesting thoughts and imaginations, and inciting feelings and desires. But though the Bible speaks of Satan as a personal spirit, thus acting in some way upon the human spirit, it does not describe him as having any shape visible to men. No such appearance is spoken of here; and we are left to suppose that Satan acted upon the mind of Jesus, just as he acts upon other men, through physical longings and necessities, through visions, imaginations, fancies, hopes, and fears. As was said above, it is this that makes the temptation of such value as a lesson to us; for in these three temptations, addressed to the bodily appetites and desires, to the pride of display, and to the love of power, Jesus was "*in all points* tempted like as we are, yet without sin;"¹ and hence he is able to help us when we are tempted, by his example, his sympathy, his spirit of grace and truth.

¹ Heb. iv. 15.

Weak and faint as he was with fasting, this inward struggle must have left Jesus weaker and fainter still. But he had struggled and prevailed as a man, as all men must struggle and prevail, by prayer and by the word of God; and this conflict and victory brought him to so high a frame of pious feeling, that to his spiritual vision the air was now filled with angels who came to minister to him,¹ — not, indeed, with earthly food, such as the ravens had brought to Elijah in that same wilderness, but with such assurances of his Father's love and approval, as were to his soul the bread of heaven, and the water of life. Thus comforted and strengthened he returned to the outer world, to eat and drink, to teach and work, to go freely among men in all conditions of temptation and of sin, that he might impart to them the inner life of faith, and turn them "from the power of Satan unto God."

NOTE ON LIVING WITHOUT FOOD. — That in certain forms of disease, and especially of nervous disease, life may be sustained for a long period without the taking of nourishment, is well known to every physician. But how long a healthy person can endure without nourishment of any kind, is an unsettled question, depending upon age, race, constitution, and custom. Hippocrates fixed the outside limit at seven days; but this is contradicted by many well-established facts.

On the 8th October, 1835, a man was buried in a coal-mine,

¹ Matt. iv. 11.

at Kilgramie in Ayrshire, and on the twenty-third day after was got out alive, though during this time he had had no nourishment, with the exception of a little water, and less than half an ounce of tobacco. He died, however, in some days after the rescue.

In July, 1825, an artillery-man deserted from Coblenz; and for forty-four days he prolonged his life in the woods upon whortleberries alone. He was found in a very reduced state, and taken to the hospital, where he was soon restored.¹

Death usually ensues much earlier where hunger and thirst act together. The pain of thirst is sooner felt, and thirst seizes more strongly upon the whole organism; so that one who takes a little water can endure abstinence from solid food much longer than one who suffers hunger and thirst together. Seven men who were floating for seventeen days upon an ice-flake in the open sea kept themselves alive upon nothing but melted sea-ice, and were at last rescued by the inhabitants of the island of Bornholm.² Cases are not infrequent in which healthy men have survived ten, twelve, or fourteen days without nourishment of any sort;³ but there are also a few cases, well established, of such endurance for a much longer period.

A Corsican prisoner by the name of *Antonio Viterbi*, who was condemned for murder, resolved to starve himself to death before

¹ See Schmidt's *Jahrbücher*, 1836, No. 10, B. XII. H, I, p. 58, for these two cases.

² Hufeland: *Journ. d. pr. Heilk.*, March, 1811, p. 116. See also in Henke's *Zeitschrift für die Staatsarzneikunde*, 1837, p. 358; article by Dr. E. Münchmeyer of Lüneburg.

³ Griffith: *London Med. Journ.* vol. xliii.

the day set for his execution. From the 2d of December until the 20th, when he died, he took no food whatever. Occasionally he would wet his mouth; and twice (on the tenth and the thirteenth day) he was so overcome by the torments of thirst that he drank a little water; but, with these slight exceptions, he endured with unconquerable fortitude the pangs of hunger and thirst for eighteen days.¹

In 1831 a Frenchman by the name of Granien, who was condemned to be executed at Toulouse, starved himself to death in prison. Neither persuasion, nor threatening, nor force, could bring him to take food of any kind, though from time to time he would take a little water. In this state he lived sixty-three days.²

A woman eighty years old, in the Julius Hospital at Würzburg, for five weeks would take nothing but water, and died at last in the sixth week.³

A young man, who had resolved to starve himself to death, lived for twenty-four days without food, taking nothing but about two quarts of water daily.

As a rule, persons who are laboring under some medical disturbance with which the body sympathizes can hold out longer without sustenance than one in a healthy condition of body and mind.

A remarkable case is reported by the General-surgeon Gerlach of Königsberg, of a musketeer, *Jerome Tuskevitz* by name, who

¹ Medical Jurisprudence, by Paris and Foublanque, vol. ii. 69-73. London, 1823.

² Henke's *Lehrb. d. gericht Med.*, 482.

³ Hufeland's *Journ.*, 17 vol. 2.

cut off the index-finger and two joints of the forefinger of his right hand in order to escape military duty. He was believed to be a little out of his head. While in the hospital, he was so filled with the terror of punishment after his recovery, that he resolved to starve himself to death. Two or three times he was persuaded to take nourishment by the assurance that he should not be punished; but his fear came back, and at last he persisted in starving himself until he died. He was in the hospital four months; and during this time there were only twenty-four days on which he took any food; and finally he went for thirty days without nourishment.¹

In 1824 a man living on the Rhine, in Germany, attempted to cure a disease of the eyes by protracted fasting. For forty-seven days he took no kind of solid food; for four weeks of this period he took only pure water, with the exception of four cups of weak tea without milk.² For other cases, consult the following authorities upon hunger:—

De Fame; Dissertatio: Æmilius Nehmer, 1846. *Archives générales de Médecine*, t. xxvii. Two cases of suicide by starving: one died on the sixtieth, the other on the sixty-third day.

Henke: *Zeitschrift für die Staatsarzneikunde*. *Traité de Médecine Légale*, par F. J. Fodere, vol. ii. Paris, 1813.

Lehrbuch der juristischen Medicin, von Orfila, uebersetzt von Dr. Gust. Knipp. 2 Band. Leipzig, 1849.

Reynolds: *Discourse upon Prodigious Abstinence*. London,

¹ *Essays of Edinburg*: see M.v. p. 11.

² Dessen and Von Gräfe's *Journal*, vol. xxi. part 3.

1669. See Bibliothèque raisonnée de l'Europe, 1747, vol. xxxix. p. 248.

Haller: Physiolog., B. vi.

Percival: Med. Essays, vol. ii. 1790.

Egron: Considérations sur l'Abstinence; Thèses de Paris, 1815, No. 22. Pourey: L'Abstinence de 1809, No. 285. Thèses, 1818, No. 84. Savigny: Observation sur les Effects de la Faim; Naufrage de la Méduse.

Hufeland's Journal, 1819, B. xlviii, No. 3, p. 95.

Piorry: De l'Abstinence, Arch. de Med. 1830. Collard de Martigny: Recherches and Journ. de Physiolog. de Magendie, B.S.S. 152-210.

CHAPTER XV.

JESUS BEGINS HIS WORK.

WHILE Jesus was in the desert, John continued preaching and baptizing at the Jordan, and was still attended by a crowd of followers. Between the Jordan and Jerusalem, and all the country round about, people kept coming and going in a constant stream. Of course the greater part returned to their homes soon after being baptized ; but some remained with John, to hear what more he had to say about the new kingdom, and thinking that, after all, he might turn out to be the Christ. To these disciples he made known all that he knew about Jesus, and so prepared them to follow him as the real Christ, as soon as he should appear. John must have wondered where Jesus had gone after his baptism, and why he hid himself so long ; for it is not likely that any one knew where he was during those forty days : yet John himself had spent so much time in solitude, that he could well understand how Jesus might love to be alone in prayer before beginning to preach. Besides, John already had such a reverence for Jesus that he did not for a moment

question any of his doings, as "the Son of God." The first thing that Jesus did, after his victory over Satan, was to go and look up John where he had left him, on the other side of the river; but he went so quietly that no one noticed him, until John pointed him out to a few of his own disciples. What had happened to him in the desert he kept as a secret of his own heart, until in after-days he confided it to his chosen friends, as a token of his sympathy with men in their temptations; but John was already taught to look upon him as the Saviour of men from their sins. Jesus had found a home in the neighborhood; and every day he might be seen walking to and fro on the bank of the river, watching the people who came to John, and no doubt feeling compassion for them as they caught at every word or act that seemed to promise them a part in the kingdom of the Messiah: yet he said nothing, did nothing, to draw attention to himself, but waited for the first gentle opportunity of revealing his own grace and truth.

One day, as he was thus walking, two of John's disciples, hearing their master speak the praises of Jesus, followed him along the bank of the river, intending to find out where he lived: as the custom then was, by thus following him to his home, they would show their desire to become his disciples. Hearing their footsteps, Jesus turned, and said to them, "What seek ye?" Though their hearts were full of the hope that he would make himself known as the Messiah,

they kept back the feeling that was uppermost, and, in a modest and respectful way, inquired of Jesus where he lived, calling him rabbi, or master, and thus acknowledging him as a teacher or a prophet. Jesus at once invited them to go with him to the house; and there they spent the whole day, listening to the first lessons of truth given by the Son of God. One of these two was the brother of that Simon who became so prominent among the disciples of Christ; and this Andrew showed at the very first his loving and confiding character by running to look up his brother, telling him, "We have found the Christ,"¹ and bringing him to Jesus. Upon seeing Simon, Jesus gave him the name of *Cephas*, or Peter, — "the rock," — by which he was always afterwards known. The third disciple was, no doubt, John, the writer of the Gospel, who modestly withholds his name.

What passed between those four plain men, in that little stone hut near the Jordan, no one of them has told us; though there was the beginning of that kingdom which Christ came to establish, — the first gathering of that company of believers in Jesus, which, under the name of the Church, was destined to fill the whole world with the glory of its Lord. Four men — three of them fishermen from the Lake of Tiberias, and their leader a carpenter from the despised town of Nazareth — there talked together of John

¹ John i. 41.

and his baptism, of the "kingdom of heaven" which he had declared to be "at hand," of the "way of the Lord" which was now to be "made ready." But eager as these first recruits were to enlist for their new leader, and under his banner to rally their countrymen to the kingdom of the Messiah, Jesus did not announce himself as the Christ, nor give out any proclamation or promise, such as the Jews were looking for from their king. His first object was to attract men to himself, to his own person, through his life and teaching; and, so fully did he impress himself upon these early followers by the talk of that first day, that John, Andrew, and Peter continued with him to the day of his death, and then became the faithful apostles of his gospel.

For the opening of his ministry, Jesus did not choose Jerusalem, which was near at hand, nor the crowded scene where John was baptizing, though by coming out as the Messiah he could soon have made a great stir in either place; but he went back quietly to the remote northern district of Galilee, where his own home lay at Nazareth. Just as he was starting, he secured two other disciples, thus increasing the number to five. Philip was a townsman of Andrew and Peter; and, as soon as he had an invitation from Jesus to join the party, he followed him, with the full belief that in this son of Joseph he had found "him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write."¹

¹ John i. 45.

Before starting, he hurried to find his friend Nathanael, and urged him to go along. But Nathanael was slow to admit that a man who had spent his whole life in a place that bore so bad a name as Nazareth, and who came from a family so obscure, could be the subject of those great and glorious prophecies. With doubt and astonishment he exclaimed, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"¹ Philip gave him the best possible answer, "Come and see:" do not judge before you know; and do not suffer your prejudice against the place to keep you from inquiring, and satisfying yourself with your own eyes concerning this wondrous person.

Nathanael was a candid man, and had the reputation of great honesty and sincerity. As he drew near with Philip, Jesus said, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." Astonished at hearing his own character thus described by a stranger, Nathanael asked, "Whence knowest thou me?" Jesus answered, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." Here was another startling fact. This stranger not only knew all about him, but knew just where he had been, and what he was doing. And now this cautious but candid man, seeing that he was read through and through, felt that Philip was right in saying that this was the Christ, and himself went even further, and confessed that such powers and

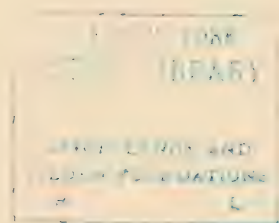
¹ John i. 46.

wonders showed a divine presence in Jesus. "Rabbi," he said, "thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." To such a faith, Jesus at once promised far greater wonders: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."¹

It shows how strong an impression Jesus had already made upon these followers, that they received without surprise this announcement of the glory of his mission, and of the interest that Heaven would show in his person. When two of these five saw the heaven opened above him on the mount, when again these saw the angels come to succor him in the garden, and finally when they all beheld him ascend from Bethany into the open heaven, they could remember these words, and measure their meaning. Yet for us also it remains true, as Luther has said, that "when Christ became man, and had entered on his ministerial office, and begun to preach, then was the heaven opened, and remains open, and has from that time — since the baptism of Christ in the Jordan — never been shut, and never will be shut, although we do not see it with our bodily eyes."

How much Nathanael meant by calling him the "Son of God," we cannot tell; for this was a title given by the Jews to their Messiah, as one sent from God, without always meaning that he was divine. Jesus said nothing about this;

¹ John i. 51.





THE FIRST DISCIPLES.

did not refuse the title, quietly accepted it ; but he chose to make himself one with us by calling himself, from the very first, “the Son of *man*.” And here was the beginning of that kingdom of heaven which the prophets had foretold with such pictures of glory, and John had announced with such a stirring call to repent. Here was the appearing of the Christ, the Saviour, the Son of David, the Son of man, the Son of God ; and such the homage and the following which he drew to himself, — six plain, poor men, one known as the carpenter, and five fishermen, — setting out on foot for a journey of seventy miles to a country village that every Jew, even these fishermen themselves, despised, there to begin a work that all the ages since have not been able to measure or exhaust.

But how was it that Jesus drew these first disciples to him so easily ? He did not offer them riches or honors ; for he had not these to give. He did not hold out the promise of a kingdom in which they should have the chief places ; and he had nothing of this sort to show. Besides, John had not pointed him out as a king who had come to conquer, but as a Lamb that was to take away the sins of the world. There was nothing in the outward condition or prospects of Jesus to tempt men to follow him in the hope of gaining any thing, either for their purses, their power, or their pride.

But, on the other hand, these men were not idlers, who

were ready to run after any new thing that might come along, or to take up with a strange leader in religion or in politics. They were men who earned their living by hard work, and had no time to waste in running after novelties ; and, as their lives afterwards show us, they were men of good common-sense and of honest feeling.

From what they said about Jesus to one another, it is plain they were full of the notion, then so common in Judea, that the Messiah was soon to appear. With this feeling they had come with the crowd to see and hear John the Baptist ; and their pious feelings were so deep and strong that they had staid with John to learn more fully his doctrine of the Messiah. Now, John had been brought up by his parents in the belief that his cousin Jesus would some day show himself to be the Christ ; and this belief was made certain to him by what took place at the baptism of Jesus. All this he had talked over with these disciples. And so, with their eager expectation of the Messiah, their confidence in John led them to take Jesus as their teacher as soon as he was pointed out. Jesus did not attempt to take the place of John, to set him aside, and to claim his disciples. He made no kind of display ; but, as was before said, he sought to win men one by one to his person, to attach them to himself, and not to gather a party by the offer of tempting rewards. And by what we learn of Jesus afterwards as a teacher, from his words that have come down to us, we

can well believe that what he said to these disciples in that long day's talk in the house together, and his whole manner of receiving them, must have attracted them to himself as the very centre and source of the wisdom, truth, and love which he had come to proclaim.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW DID JESUS LOOK?

BUT above all this, and as giving tone to all that Jesus said and did, there must have been in his countenance a beauty and dignity, a grace and majesty, that gave the impression of something extraordinary, if not supernatural, in his person and character. No picture of Christ, no description even of his personal appearance, has come down to us from any one who had looked upon his face. There is a story that Luke was a painter, as well as a physician, and that he took a portrait of Jesus, which was copied and handed down, and became the model head of Christian art. But there is no evidence that Luke ever made a picture of his Master; and nowhere in his Gospel does he give so much as a hint of his personal appearance. It would be impossible to combine in one portrait and one expression all the various traits that we find in the character of Jesus: yet we may form some idea of him if we set before us the most perfect type of the pure Jewish race as it then was in Syria,—a man of medium height, finely proportioned, his figure well

developed by physical labor and by life in the open air, the hands and feet, however, small and graceful; his complexion light and clear; the forehead broad and high, and projecting with lines of strength and beauty; the profile oval; the nose slightly aquiline; the eyes a liquid blue; the mouth small and gently curved; the lips thin, and playing with smiles or with sympathy, but easily compressed to firmness; the hair auburn, inclining toward a golden hue, especially in the beard, which was full and flowing.

But the character of his face lay in its expression, which combined in a wondrous degree, beauty and majesty, sympathy and strength, tenderness and dignity. There was something marvellous in his eyes, that fascinated little children, and drew them to his arms without fear; that caused the poor, the sick, the sorrowing, to look to him with confidence as a friend; that led even the worst of sinners to trust in his compassion; and yet that caused the Pharisees to quail under his anger, the mob to make way for him to pass through unharmed, the soldiers to fall to the ground before him in Gethsemane, Peter to tremble and weep with shame and remorse, and the penitent thief to believe on him as the Lord of Paradise. Those blue eyes, as clear and gentle as the sky of his native Syria, as deep and tranquil as the lake he so much loved, yet, like the sky, capable of sudden flashes of lightning, like the lake, of sudden bursts of storm; eyes welling over with sympathy at every sight

of human sorrow, glistening with pity for the ignorant and the erring, beaming with grace for the poor, for the weak, for the penitent, but with a lurking indignation for the covetous and the proud; eyes that, through all changes of expression, from their inmost depth steadily reflected the awful yet attractive purity of a holy love,—these eyes were the visible, speaking Christ, the person and the power of the Son of man, in which they who were pure in heart might even see God.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WEDDING SURPRISE.

THE disciples of Jesus had faith enough to follow him; though they must have wondered that he went to Nazareth rather than to Jerusalem, and took them to a carpenter's shop instead of the synagogue or the temple. They had seen and heard enough to lead them to expect a great deal more. From what John had told them, and what Jesus had said and done, they believed they had found the Christ; but what next? Where were his signs from heaven? Where was his kingdom? If Jesus had taken them into the desert, and proposed to set up a convent on the spot where he had conquered Satan, and there to gather an order of hermits, or a school of prophets, in support of his doctrine and cause, these men, who had left their work and their homes to follow John the Baptist, would not have hesitated to follow him. Indeed, this would have seemed to them like the return of the prophet Elijah, for which the Jews were looking; and they had an example of this sort of religious reform in the Essenes, who had their convents in the desert north-west of the Dead Sea.

The idea of this really pious brotherhood was, that holiness was to be gained by being very strict in keeping the law, by devoting one's self entirely to the service of God, by giving up marriage, family life, and the business of the world, and going into the desert to spend one's days in fasting and prayer. They lived in communities, having all property and all labor in common. They dressed alike, and lived very simply. When they went abroad, it was for works of kindness to the sick and the poor. But Jesus did not join the Essenes. He had just spent forty days alone in the wilderness in communion with God ; but this was to prepare himself for going among men as their Teacher and Helper, and not to teach men to follow him into the desert. If he had set up a monastery, a place to which men must go in order to live pious lives, how slowly must his religion have spread in the world ! how few could have complied with this condition ! and, just as far as men became Christians, human life would have come to a standstill ; family, home, business, every thing, being given up in order to be religious. But Jesus had quite another doctrine and purpose for his religion. He would carry its spirit into the family, the school, the shop, the counting-room, the exchange ; and would make the world better by teaching men how to live better in the world as it is. And so while his disciples were looking for him to start for Jerusalem, and there to set up his kingdom, he took them with him to

a marriage ; and there at a wedding-party, in the midst of a gay company, he manifested himself as the Christ. This was as much a surprise to his disciples as to the other guests. But what a lovely view it gives us of the character of Jesus, and of the nature of his religion, that he made his first appearance as the great Prophet at this social festival, and used his wondrous power in making the entertainment pass off as pleasantly as possible !

Whoever he may have been as the Son of God, he began his ministry as a man full of all human sympathies ; and, whatever of sadness and sorrow may have weighed upon him through the sins of the world, he would counteract this not by separating himself and his followers from the world, but by carrying his presence and his religion into the family and society with a cheerful tone and a living power. Far from separating religion from happiness, or making happiness consist only in direct acts of religion, Jesus enjoyed the happiness of others, entered into their feelings, and added to their pleasures by his gifts.

Just over the hills to the north of Nazareth, about seven miles distant, was the little village of Cana, where the mother of Jesus had relatives ; and it was at their house that Jesus first came out openly as the Messiah. There was a wedding in the family ; and Mary was sent for to assist in entertaining the company. The servants all knew her, and took their orders from her as from the mistress of the house.

Jesus was invited to the wedding, and also his disciples who had followed him home to Nazareth. A Jewish wedding was a time of great rejoicing to all the friends and neighbors of the parties. The bridegroom and his friends, with music, torches, and flowers, led the bride from her father's house to the house of the groom or his father, where feasting and merry-making went on sometimes for several days. At the principal supper some person of note among the guests sat at the head of the company, and presided over the feast. In the entrance of the house, or at the lower end of the dining-hall, there were always large jars filled with water for washing the hands of the guests, and for other ceremonies that the Jews went through with before eating. It is likely that these relatives of Mary were poor ; for their marriage-feast appears to have lasted only one day, and the wine gave out before the supper was over. Mary was told of this, and was anxious to save her friends the mortification of having the guests discover it. She came and told Jesus, plainly supposing that he could do something to avoid this trouble. This feeling on her part was the natural expression of that faith which she had nursed in secret for thirty years. She knew that at his baptism the Spirit had declared him to be the Son of God ; she knew that he had been in the desert to make ready for his work ; she had seen his disciples, and heard what they had to say about him and his kingdom ; and her lifelong faith in him as the child of so many won-



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ders and promises, and of such piety and devotion, rose to the sublime conviction that he could do all things. Perhaps she betrayed too much eagerness as a mother to have Jesus show himself to be something wonderful; perhaps she even seemed to dictate her wishes as the will of Providence: for some reason Jesus restrained her with a tone of dignity, though using the same respectful and serious address with which he afterwards gave his parting word from the cross. As in the temple, he felt once more that even the wishes and commands of an earthly parent must give place to the will of his Father in heaven. Then he was eager to begin his Father's work: now he did not feel that the time was ripe for him to act out his heavenly calling; and he would not do this for curiosity, nor at the bidding of any one else.

But his mother was possessed with the feeling that he would show himself to be the Son of God; and though she did not further press him to what her heart so longed for, yet, believing in him with all her heart, she told the servants to do whatever he might say to them. A while after, Jesus told them to "fill the water-pots with water; and they filled them up to the brim."¹ Thus far, all was natural. It was natural that Mary should have great expectations from such a son; natural that she should seek to draw him out; natural that the servants should acknowledge her authority, and obey her command; natural that, when told to do so,

¹ John ii. 7.

they should fill the empty water-jars as full as they could hold. These waiting-men certainly had no connection with Jesus: they were not his disciples, not even his servants. They filled the jars this time, precisely as they had filled them a hundred times before, — with water brought from the fountain where all the neighbors went for their supply. But now came a marvellous surprise. At the command of Jesus, these same servants drew off cups from the jars, into which they had just poured water; and, behold, it was wine! They took this to the head of the table, not saying where they had got it; and he, on tasting it, found it such good wine, that he sent for the bridegroom, and praised him for its excellence. It was the custom to serve the best wines first, and to follow these with wines of a poorer sort; but, so fine was the flavor of this, that the president of the feast said, “Thou hast kept the good wine until now.” The bridegroom was as much surprised at the compliment as his guest was at the wine. He had just now been in trouble because the wine was giving out, and had no idea where this new supply had come from. Of course, in a few moments it was noised about how the water had been turned into wine; and everybody was filled with wonder. Jesus had “manifested forth his glory.”¹ Yes, indeed; and such glory! — the power of spirit over matter, of his personal will over all created things. On that point there could be no mistake. He had

¹ John ii. 11.

not touched the jars, had put nothing into them, had not been near them, had not even first tasted what the servants drew from them. To make wine, grapes must be grown with care, must ripen in the sun, must be gathered and pressed; then the juice must ferment, and be allowed to settle, and grow clear and pure. But what thus requires months of care and work and skill, was here done in an instant, — done by a mere thought, an act of will, without so much as the moving of a hand. Between such a cause and such an effect there could be no natural connection. This was a power above all known natural causes and operations, a power above mere human reach, a power which could come only from God. Yet to Jesus this was just as easy and natural as for his mother to speak to him, as for the servants to put the water into the jars. It was in and of his *nature* to perform such wonders; it was simply the forth-putting of his spirit. But the doing of such things showed him to be the person that the angels had promised at his birth, — Emmanuel, God with us.

Yet in this very act of divinity he linked himself most tenderly with our human nature; and, however we may wonder and adore before this manifestation of the glory of Jesus, we will not forget that he made it in the bosom of the family, and at the marriage-feast. The glory of God came to hallow and enrich the joys of men: the Son of God is still the Son of Mary, and goes from house to house as a

guest and a friend. And if we will but fill ourselves with his Spirit, so as to feel his presence, he will be the guest of every feast, the joy of every home, will turn the most common wants of the household into occasions of his power and grace, will manifest himself in the bread we break and the cup we drink, and will throw around the most tender and lovely scenes of earth the blessing and the glory of heaven.

CHAPTER XVIII.

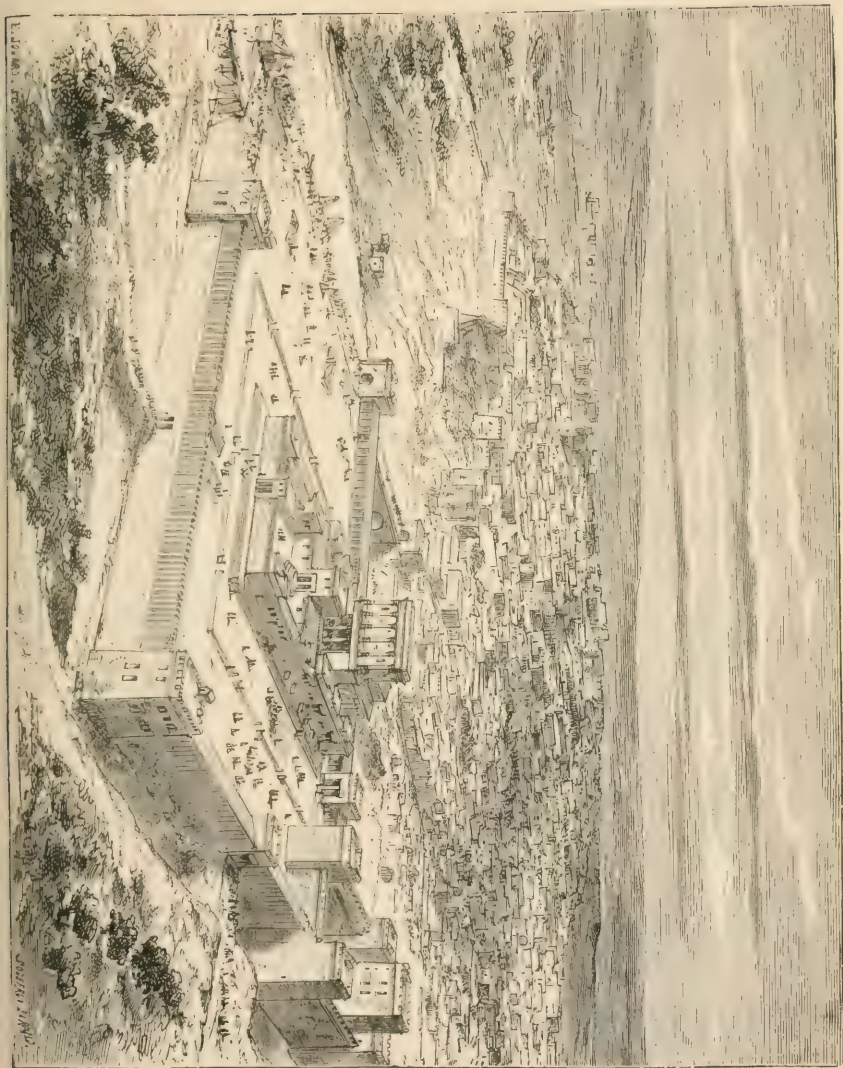
THE WHIP.

THIS scene of peace and love was followed by one of commotion and anger. Jesus, who just now appeared as the guest and friend participating in the innocent gayeties of life, is seen in the temple laying the whip upon the shoulders of those about him, and driving men and beasts out of the courts. This made a great stir, and came near raising a mob. Why did he do so? And how could he do so without being seized by the guardians of the temple, or resisted by the men whom he handled so roughly?

The temple at Jerusalem was "the house of the Lord," the sacred place of worship for the whole Jewish nation. The main building was too sacred even for the Jews themselves to enter. In the central part of it a room thirty feet square was the "Holy of Holies," which none but the high priest could approach, and he only once a year. Here were once kept the ark and the tables of the covenant, the golden censer, the golden pot of manna, and "Aaron's rod that budded;"¹ here, too, was the mercy-seat with the cherubim

¹ Heb. ix. 4.

of glory; and in front of all was the "veil," or curtain, which was torn into two parts by the earthquake at the time of Christ's crucifixion. Before the Holy of Holies was the Holy Place, sixty feet by thirty, where stood the altar of incense, the table of show-bread, and the golden candlestick. In front of this, again, was a porch fifteen feet in depth, much wider and higher than the temple, and the entrance to which was by a magnificent portal hung with richly embroidered curtains, over which was a golden vine with clusters of jewels in the form of grapes. Against the main building, on the north and south sides, were three stories of chambers for the priests, and for materials used in worship. But the roof of the temple rose above these in the centre, and was adorned with rows of golden spikes. Before the porch, and running all around the main building, was a wide court paved with smooth stones. This was the court of the Israelites; but it was divided into two parts by a balustrade; and the inner part, next to the temple proper, was for the priests alone. The sides of this court were lined with porches and halls. In this was the altar for the burnt offerings, and the laver and other vessels and utensils for the use of the priests in the sacrifices. All around the balustrade the Jewish men could stand for worship; but women were not allowed to come up the steps to this platform. Upon a lower terrace, separated by another balustrade, was a second court upon all sides of the building, to



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which women were admitted. Here also were halls and porches for various uses. Below this again, and separated by another wall, was a wider area, called the Court of the Gentiles. Here upon all four sides, against the outer walls, were great colonnades, which were divided into halls for the Levites and the rabbis. So, in entering the temple, one would first pass through a gate in the high outside wall, and cross the covered porch to the first, or outer court, — the “Court of the Gentiles,” — which was open to the sky. Crossing this, he would come to a high balustrade and a flight of steps, by the side of which was a warning that no Gentile should go farther, under penalty of death. Passing up these steps, he would come to the second court, where Jewish women, as well as men, were allowed to stand. Going through another balustrade, and up a second flight of steps, he would come to the third and fourth courts, really one area, at the same level, but divided by a low balustrade into the Court of the Israelites for men alone, and the Court of the Priests. Crossing this inner court, — the place of the sacrifices, — he came at last to the sacred building itself; first the porch, then the Holy Place, and finally the Holy of Holies.

Such was the building as it stood in the time of Christ, — a series of terraces, or platforms, rising in all at least forty feet above the summit of Mount Moriah, from the highest point of which the temple, built of marble and adorned

with gold, lifted itself above all its walls, courts, gates, and porticos, so as to be visible from all parts of the city, and to catch the eye from almost every point of approach to Jerusalem. Every Jew was trained from infancy to look upon the temple with sacred awe, and to make at least one pilgrimage every year to this house of the Lord. From all parts of the land of Palestine, and from all parts of the world where Jews were living, the tribes came up to their holy city, singing on the way, "Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem! They shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces! Because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good."¹ To cherish this idea of the sacredness of the temple was most important, not only for the religious sentiment of the people, but for keeping alive their national feeling as Jews, especially as they were scattered among other nations. Nevertheless the convenience of the worshippers had been allowed to encroach upon the sacredness of the sanctuary. For the sacrifices which the law required, sheep, oxen, and doves must be provided; and the officers of the temple insisted that the temple-tax should be paid in the old-fashioned Jewish shekel, which was no longer coined, and was seldom to be had in the shops or the markets. Of course people from the country, who had only Roman money, and those

¹ Ps. cxxii.

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MARKET IN THE COURT OF THE GENTILES.

coming from Egypt and Asia, who had various foreign coins, must go to a broker, and buy the Jewish coin with which to pay their dues. To save time and trouble to strangers, and also as a source of revenue to the temple, at the great festivals a market, or fair, was opened in the Court of the Gentiles; and here sheep, oxen, and doves were offered for sale; and money-changers sat at little tables ready to exchange shekels of the proper stamp and weight for other kinds of money. This traffic had grown up by degrees. The buyers were accommodated; the sellers were sure of selling quickly and at a good profit; and the priests got a good rent for the stalls. No doubt many would argue that such business was proper within the temple-walls, because it was limited to articles used in the temple-worship; and, besides, was only allowed in the Court of the Gentiles, which was hardly considered sacred by the Jews, since people of other races might enter it. Yet, if this part of the temple-enclosure should be turned into a market, the Jews themselves would soon cease to regard the upper courts, or even the Holy Place, with reverence. The noise of trade, the lowing of the cattle, the chattering of buyers and sellers, would rise above the voices of prayer and praise, and would scatter all feelings of devotion. Children would think of the place as quite as much of a market as a temple; and strangers who were allowed to trade within the walls would look upon the Jews as caring more for trade than for

religion. Now, as we learn from the Old Testament, from the earliest times the prophets were accustomed to use their authority in the name of the Lord, to reform any abuses in religion, and to purify the place or the forms of worship from corruptions. Thus the kings Hezekiah and Josiah, stirred up by the prophets, cleansed and purified the house of the Lord. Jeremiah, speaking in the name of the Lord, asks with indignation, "Is this house, which ye have called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?"¹ And Ezekiel warns the ministers of the sanctuary to cleanse it of all abominations.²

Jesus now stood forth as a prophet, speaking in the name of God; and, as the people were looking for their Messiah, this sudden and decided way of clearing the temple would lead many to ask if this was not the Christ.

Nobody would venture to defend this traffic in the temple: every one knew at least that it was wrong. And as one bold, earnest man can sometimes put to shame a crowd who are bent upon some act of wickedness, and can rule the passions of a mob by appealing to conscience or to fear, we can understand how the act, the words, and the manner of Jesus may have filled these profaners of the temple with the fear of a judgment from God, and have caused them to hurry themselves and their goods outside of the temple-gate. A sort of panic seized them; and there was no one to take

¹ Jer. vii. 11.

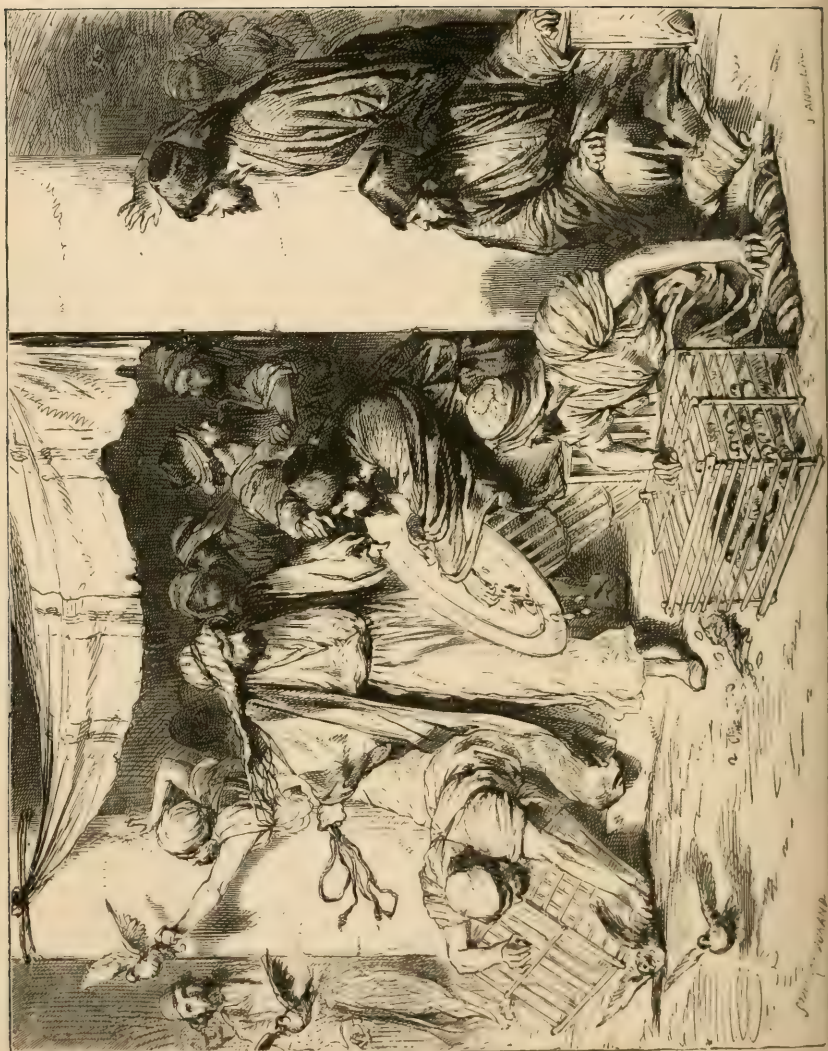
² Ezek. xlv. 6-17.

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their part. As yet Jesus had not wrought miracles in Jerusalem; but the report of his miracle at Cana had been spread abroad; and this was enough to create a feeling of awe as he stood there with the scourge of justice in his hand, to purify the place that every Jew knew ought to be kept holy. But above all this was that majesty of look in the eyes of Jesus, which was spoken of in Chapter XVI., as a source of his sudden and wondrous power over men. It was his eye, more than his whip, that made the profaners of the temple quail before him. As he drove out the cattle with his whip, their owners fled from his look. The bystanders felt a majesty and power in his presence that gave a divine authority to his words, "Take these hence: make not my Father's house an house of merchandise."¹

After the first surprise was over, some gathered courage enough to demand proof of his authority; or perhaps, having heard a rumor of his miracle, they were curious to see one for themselves: so they said, "What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?" But as Jesus never would work wonders just to meet the demands of the curious, or the doubts of the sceptical, so now he answered them not by a miracle, but by a prophecy: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

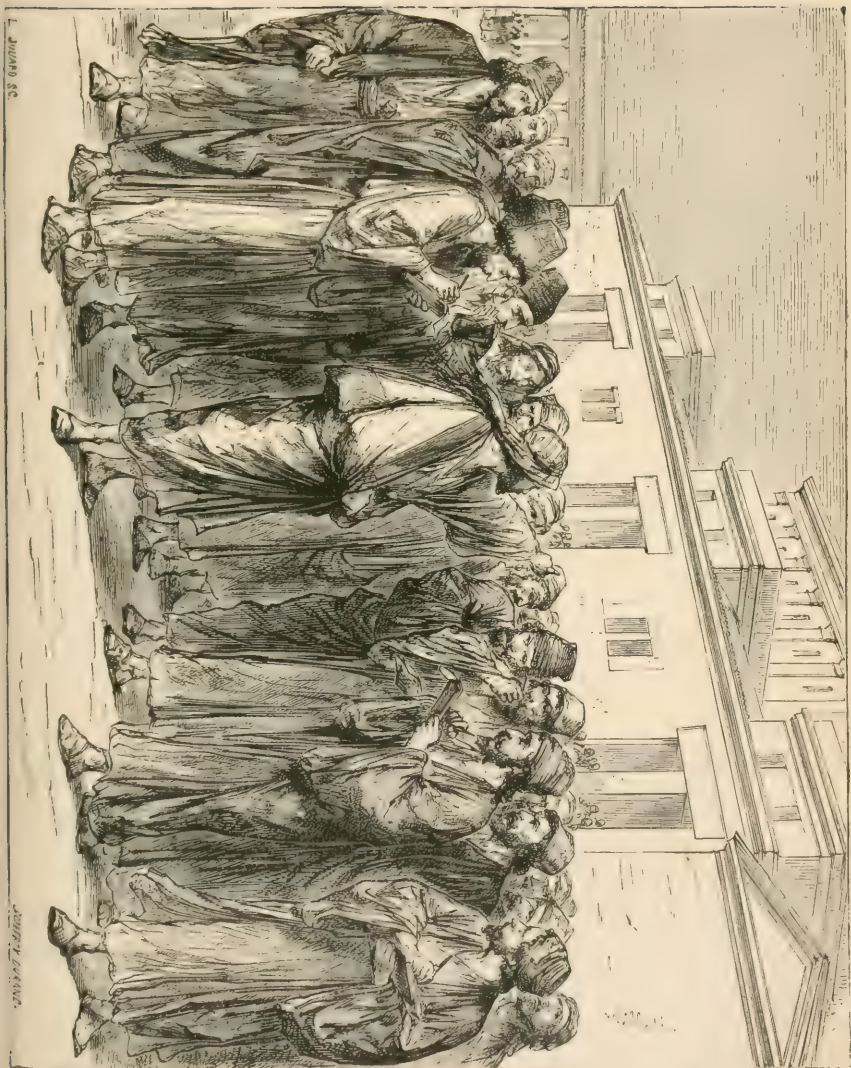
To win the favor of the Jews, that odious tyrant, Herod the Great, had enlarged and rebuilt the temple upon a scale

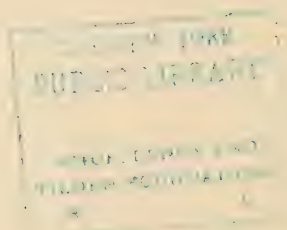
¹ John ii. 16.

of magnificence that exceeded the glory of Solomon. The main building was finished by Herod ; but additions to it were made by his successors, so that it was nearly fifty years before the work was fairly done. The Jews, thinking only of the huge walls and columns before them, thought Jesus must be either trifling or mad, to offer to build the temple in three days. Even the disciples, who could doubt nothing that he might say, were not able to give any meaning to these mysterious words. But when, three days after his crucifixion, he rose from the dead, they remembered that he had said this unto them.¹

Thus did Jesus ennoble the human body : first sanctifying it by making it a divine abode, the earthly house of the Son of God ; and next glorifying it by redeeming it from the grave, and himself returning to the presence of his Father in the likeness of the Son of man ; a body free from any defect of nature, and any stain of sin ; a body in which dwelt all the fulness of God ; a body feeling every touch and sympathy of our human pains and griefs, yet which even the wounds of the nails and the spear could not mar, nor death destroy ; the true apotheosis of man, for which the poetry and art of the Old World, and the science of the New, have labored,—man no more of the earth earthy, the temple of the Father, the perfected, enfranchised, glorified Son of God.

¹ John ii. 22.





CHAPTER XIX.

CHRIST'S FIRST PUPIL.

IT would not take long for all Jerusalem to hear of the uproar at the temple, — how a strange prophet from Galilee had driven out buyers and sellers, sheep and oxen, and nobody had dared to oppose him; for, though there was no such thing as a newspaper to report the scene, news spread very quickly from mouth to mouth in a city so closely built as Jerusalem, where the houses were crowded together in narrow streets, and every house was filled with occupants from the ground to the roof. As the temple stood upon a hill facing the greater part of the town, any commotion there would attract the notice of multitudes; and an outcry on Mount Moriah could be heard across the ravine, upon Zion and Acra, where most of the houses were. Besides, everybody went to the temple, not only for worship, but to meet friends, and hear the news. And at this time the city was full of strangers who had come to the great feast, who spent their time mostly at the temple, and who would themselves be among the buyers of animals for

sacrifice, and would wish to change money for their taxes. So the report of what Jesus had said or done would spread like wild-fire through the city; and everybody would be running to the temple to catch a sight of the bold stranger.

The excitement caused by this act of authority in the temple was heightened by acts of wonder performed in the next following days; for, though Jesus refused to give the Jews "a sign" for his doing what their law and their own consciences taught them was right, he did afterwards, in the most quiet and natural way, do wonders for the sick, the lame, the blind, as he met these in his walks through the streets, or as they were brought to him by their friends. John tells us that "many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did."¹ How many, or what these were, John does not say; but, from what we know of the miracles of Jesus, we may be sure that these first wonders were for doing good, and not for showing power or getting a name. He would not speak to the eyes nor the fancy of men by signs, but to their hearts and their faith by living truth. And so when people who had seen or heard of his miracles crowded around him, and called him the Christ, and said they were ready to follow him as their king, he knew them too well to commit himself to them, or to make himself the leader of such a party of enthusiastic but visionary followers.

¹ John ii. 23.

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THE PHARISEES.

What sort of followers he wished, what kind of a kingdom he meant to set up, he made plain to a pupil who came to him for the first lesson in the new faith. This pupil was himself a "master in Israel:" he belonged to the sanhedrim, or council of seventy, the supreme court of the Jews for religious affairs, which had control over all the synagogues in Palestine, which regulated matters of faith and worship, and ordered the punishment of heretics, idolaters, and apostates. It was this same body that at last brought Jesus to trial, and after his death had Peter and John put in prison; and that sent Saul of Tarsus to search the synagogues for Christians, and bring them to punishment.¹ A member of this grand council was required to know perfectly the law of Moses, and all the rules and doctrines which had grown up around it, all the traditions of the elders, and the customs of the synagogues. Hence the people looked up to every such rabbi as a teacher and an authority in every thing relating to religion. As a matter of course, such men were apt to be proud of their wisdom, and overbearing toward the people. They made a show of their prayers and piety; they loved "to sit in Moses' seat," and pretended to speak with his authority, just as nowadays the pope calls himself the successor of Peter, and claims that the doctrines and laws which he gives forth have the authority of God. But among the seventy mem-

¹ Acts ix. 1, 2.

bers of the grand council were some truly honorable and pious men, who used their office for the good of the people, and honestly sought to know and teach the truth. Such a one was Joseph of Arimathea, who refused to join in the outcry against Jesus, and who, after his crucifixion, begged his body, and laid it in his own new tomb. And such a one, too, was Nicodemus. Once, when the sanhedrim sent officers to arrest Jesus, Nicodemus stood up for him, and said, "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?"¹ This shows a candid mind, willing to know the truth, and wishing to see fair play. And after the crucifixion he also went to the grave of Jesus with costly spices to anoint and embalm the body of him whom his colleagues had first condemned by Jewish law, and then had persuaded the Roman governor to put to death.² It was natural enough that such an honest soul should see in the miracles of Jesus a proof that "God was with him," and should wish to know him and to learn from him as "a teacher come from God." But wishing to keep his influence over the people, and knowing how easy it would be to make enemies at a time when the whole city was full of rumors, parties, and prejudices, he went to Jesus by night, intending first to satisfy himself before doing any thing that should

¹ John vii. 50.

² John xix. 39. The Roman government had taken away from the sanhedrim the power of capital punishment. Jesus was put to death after the Roman custom.

commit him as a disciple. It was no small thing, however, for such a man to make up his mind to go even in this quiet, private way, and ask to be taught by a stranger who was already despised as a Nazarene, and hated as a reformer.

Of course we have only a brief report of what passed between Jesus and Nicodemus. One or the other of them must afterwards have told it to John,—most likely Nicodemus, when, after the death of Jesus, he joined his disciples,—and John has given only the main points of this most interesting talk. To understand what Jesus said of being “born again,” we must keep in mind that the Jews looked upon their commonwealth, or, as we should now say, their church, as the kingdom of God, and upon membership in that as necessary to getting to heaven. All who were not born Jews were heathen, and as such were shut out from the kingdom of heaven; but a heathen might become a member of that kingdom by giving up his idols, and embracing the faith and the worship of the Jews.

In the temple at Jerusalem, there was a court to which such “proselytes” could be admitted. Owing to the great change in their ideas and beliefs, and also in their lives and habits, produced by this change of religion, they were said to be new creatures, or new-born. They were compared to a slave who had been set free, and adopted as a child. We use this very expression nowadays to describe one who has

given up bad habits to lead a better life. When a prodigal, a profane swearer, a drunkard, a thief, is reformed, we say, "He is a new man." As a sign of this great change, it was a custom of the Jews to baptize heathen whom they received as proselytes to their faith; and thus they were "born of water" into the "kingdom of heaven;" from being servants of the Devil, they became children of God. All this was perfectly familiar to Nicodemus, so that the words of Jesus need not have puzzled him. But, just because such words were so familiar, it puzzled him the more to guess what Jesus could mean by insisting that *he*, and every one, must be "born again" in order to enter the kingdom of God. Nicodemus had the idea, that to be of the seed of Abraham, was also to be a son of God; that to belong to the commonwealth of Israel, was to be in the kingdom of God: just as being born in America makes one an American, no matter what may be his name, his race, his color, or his manner of life. He was born a Jew,—born within the kingdom of God. He had risen to be a "master in Israel." And the idea that *he* should now be baptized like any heathen, and become a new man, in order to enter that kingdom, seemed as strange and absurd as that he should actually be born over again as a little child.

But Jesus taught him that only they are God's true children who in their hearts love him and do his will, that the real kingdom was first of all in one's own soul. When

we learn to govern all our thoughts, our feelings, our wishes, our aims, by the spirit of truth, of kindness and good-will; when we keep down all bad passions, all evil words, all wicked thoughts, all wrong desires, and only wish and try to do what is right and good, — then “the kingdom of heaven” is begun in our hearts. We have the same spirit which makes the angels holy and blessed. Now, the wish to please God, the desire to obey him in all things, to take his will instead of our own, to do every thing that God would have us do, and nothing that God would not have us do, — this one spirit of loving obedience to God includes all the rest, — truth, kindness, good-will, purity of thought, of feeling, of conduct; and hence this heavenly spirit is also called the kingdom of God. God rules in the heart as its king. But this spirit of love to God and man was first shown to us in its perfection by Jesus. In every act of his life he did the will of his Father in heaven; and in all his words and acts towards men he showed the most perfect love and good-will. Thus it was that by his preaching and his life he brought again to selfish and sinful men that kingdom of God which was set up at first in Paradise. And since it is through Christ that we are brought back from sin to holiness, from selfishness to love, this new feeling of gentle and holy love in our hearts is also called the kingdom of Christ. When we love Jesus as our Saviour, obey him as our Teacher, serve him as our Master, then the

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kingdom of the Messiah, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, is begun in our hearts.

Children are like their parents in looks, in tones, in manners, in ideas, in temperament, in character. So when we have taken the will of God to rule us, and the word of God to be our guide; when we seek to please God in our doings, strive to become like God in our character, — then we are called “the children of God,” we are “born again.” And since this great change of giving up our selfish wills, and taking God into our hearts as king, comes from the Spirit of God acting upon our minds, we are said to be “born of the Spirit.” To put away evil thoughts, passions, desires, habits, and to fill the mind and heart with what is pure, lovely, and good, is to make the inner man, or soul, clean, as the outer man, or body, is made clean by water; and hence to be baptized is a sign of this inner cleansing of the mind. And so it is, that on giving up selfish and sinful thoughts and ways, and in place of these taking into our hearts the pure love of God and good-will toward men, we are “born of water and of the Spirit” as the children of God, and enter into the kingdom of heaven. Thus the lesson of Jesus to Nicodemus, though simple enough for a little child, was deeper and broader than all the wisdom of the world. The greatest masters of science and philosophy must still come to Jesus in the spirit of a little child, to be born anew of his love.

CHAPTER XX.

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

THE bustle and confusion of the feast were over. The great camp of pilgrims outside the city-walls was broken up; and the crowds that for days had filled the streets and the temple were now scattered over the neighboring hills, moving homeward in slow caravans, singing the "songs of Zion," and telling of what they had seen and heard in the city. The strange prophet from Galilee, who had driven the traders out of the temple, and had done so many wonders, was the talk of everybody; and thousands of tongues carried the name of Jesus over the land, if not as rapidly, yet as widely, as if there had been daily papers and a telegraph to report his sayings and doings. Jerusalem itself had settled down into its every-day life; the Roman soldiers, relieved from the care of half a million strangers, were lounging about the forts and the guard-houses; the priests went through the daily round of prayers and sacrifices with only a handful of worshippers; the hangers-on at the city-gates and the porches of the temple whiled away their time in disputing

over rumors of the Messiah ; the cattle-dealers and money-changers sneaked back into the Court of the Gentiles, their fear of Jesus being turned to hatred ; and the Pharisees, with all their pretended zeal for holy things, winked at this abuse of the temple, because they wished to raise a party against Jesus, whose influence over the people they both hated and feared.

Meantime, Jesus had gone into the country on the borders of the Jordan, a region already sacred as the scene of his baptism, of his temptation, and of the first calling of his disciples. He could not now, as then, go with his disciples alone ; but a great many from Jerusalem and the neighboring places, excited by what they had seen and heard of him, followed him on his journey ; and many strangers also delayed going home from the Passover, from curiosity to learn whether this might not turn out to be the Christ. All who confessed their belief in his doctrine of "the kingdom of God," and their willingness to lead a new life, were baptized in this new faith ; and, so many were there, that it was even said that "Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John."¹ John himself was still baptizing at a place called Salim,² farther up the valley of the Jordan ; and some of his disciples, who had not followed Jesus, tried to stir up rivalry by reporting that all men were running after Jesus. But John was too great for jealousy, too noble for

¹ John iv. 1.

² John iii. 23.

rivalry, too humble for ambition, too true and good a servant to seek for himself the honor that he knew to belong to his Master ; and, as he had already proclaimed Jesus to be the Son of God, he said again, “ I am not the Christ ; but I am sent before him. Now that he is come, my joy is complete. He must increase, but I must decrease.”¹ Jesus afterwards paid a tribute to John, in which he gave him higher praise than ever fell from his lips concerning any other man. “ He was a burning and a shining light ; ”² “ Among those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist. ”³

Though teaching and baptizing at points so near, Jesus and John did not meet at this time ; and, indeed, they never met again. The Pharisees kept spies upon them, and would have been glad to get rid of them both, though they did not quite dare to molest either. But, soon after, John was cast into prison by Herod, who at last was betrayed by Herodias and her daughter into putting him to death. These signs of trouble caused Jesus to quit Judea ; for, though he was ready at any moment to lay down his life for men, he was not willing to throw it away before he had finished his ministry of truth and love, and had gathered the materials of his church. Besides, he wished to begin his public teaching in his native Galilee ; and so, accompanied by the little band of disciples, he set out for his home.

¹ John iii. 38-31.² John v. 35.³ Luke vii. 28.

They journeyed on foot, supplying their daily wants from the little means which some of them had saved from fishing, and he from his earnings at his father's trade. From the banks of the Jordan, they went up one of the rocky ravines that slant off toward the north-east, till they struck the great highway of travel from Jerusalem to Samaria. Here they came upon a broad and beautiful plain, like a Western prairie, without ridge, break, or fence, covered with ripening grain and brilliant flowers, but, unlike a prairie, dotted also with clumps of olive-trees, and bounded on all sides by ranges of hills and mountains. A walk of three or four hours across this plain of Mùkhna brought them to its north-western corner, where the loveliest valley of all Palestine opens into it, between the famous mountains Gerizim and Ebal, known as the mountains of blessing and of cursing.¹ Ebal, a steep, rocky ridge, bare of trees and vegetation, with frowning precipices twelve hundred feet high, looks as desolate and forbidding as if all the curses had fallen upon it. But the valley seems to have caught and kept all the blessing. Fountains gushing forth upon every side, purling brooks, fields of grass, gardens of vegetables, orchards of fruit-trees, groves of olives and mulberries, the whole enlivened with the music of birds, and decked with the most wondrous hues of blue, purple, and violet in the air and the sky, make this secluded vale a very paradise of beauty and of peace.

¹ Deut. xi. 29, xxvii. 11; Josh. xxiv. 1.

This was the first view that Abram had of the land of promise; and here he built his first altar to the Lord.¹ This was the spot that Jacob chose for his home when he returned from Haran with his family and his cattle; here he bought a piece of land which he gave afterwards to his son Joseph;² and here Joseph was brought up from Egypt to be buried.³ Into this same valley Joshua led the people; and having ranged them in opposite ranks, six tribes on each side, he made them swear obedience to the law of God, while the Levites repeated each commandment, and the mountains echoed its blessing and its curse. And now the long-promised Seed of Abraham,⁴ the Star of Jacob,⁵ the true Leader and Saviour of Israel,⁶ came into this home of the patriarchs, this resting-place of the warriors, with the gospel of blessing and peace, taking away the curse, and giving the water of life. But he came as a tired, hungry man, sharing the common wants and pains of our every-day life, and thus putting himself in sympathy with those whom he came to save, as if in personal need of their sympathy and help.

The little party had started early, and had walked many weary miles; and it was already high noon, hot and sultry, as they rounded the base of Mount Gerizim, and came down upon the valley of Shechem. But the town was a good two miles farther, stretching its white walls in the sun on a

¹ Gen. xii. 6.² Gen. xxxiii. 19; John iv. 5.³ Josh. xxiv. 32.⁴ Gal. iii. 16.⁵ Num. xxiv. 17.⁶ Heb. iv. 8, 9.

ridge at the top of the valley ; and so, sending his disciples on to buy food, Jesus turned aside to the right, and sat down to rest under the shade of a mulberry-tree by the side of Jacob's well. This well was dug by the patriarch himself, in order that he might have plenty of water, on his own premises, for his great herds of cattle ; for in Palestine, where in the long dry season the streams and fountains run low and sometimes fail, a well is often held as private property ; and, though there were so many rills and springs in the valley of Shechem, Jacob may have had none upon his own land, or at least he would wish the further security of a good well of his own ; and so, by boring through the rocky soil to a great depth,¹ he struck a bed of water that never since has failed ; for, after almost four thousand years, the thirsty travellers of to-day, Jews, Samaritans, Christians, and Mohammedans, all alike cherishing the name of the patriarch, can say, " Our father Jacob drank of this well himself, and his children, and his cattle."

At the time of the story, the well was in the keeping of the Samaritans, who made Shechem the headquarters of their tribe. These were the descendants of the common people of Assyria, who were sent to occupy the country after the Israelites had been carried off captive to Babylon ; and, though they kept up some notions and customs of their old idol-worship, they had so far adopted the religion of the

¹ I found the well about seventy feet deep.

Jews, that they kept the law of Moses as sacred, and had built a temple on the top of Gerizim, to the God of the patriarch.¹ They even claimed that this temple was more holy than that at Jerusalem; and, like the Jews, they were looking for a Messiah who should come as the great Teacher and Saviour. But between the Jews and the Samaritans there was a deep and lasting hatred. The Jews despised the Samaritans, because they were a foreign race, or, at best, a mixture of foreigners with the poor Israelitish peasants who had escaped going into captivity; and also because they did not acknowledge the later prophets, as well as Moses, for teachers and guides. And the Samaritans hated the Jews for despising them, and for refusing their help in rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple after the captivity.² Though they did not object to trading together,—for business commonly gets the better of national grudges and of religious scruples,—and though they often had to pass through each other's territory, yet Jews and Samaritans had as little to do with one another as possible, and were ready at any time to pick a quarrel. It was to the chief city and sanctuary of these jealous and rival neighbors that our little company of Jewish travellers had come, as they were returning from their own capital and temple, after the feast of the Passover.

Jacob's well was too distant from the town to be much

¹ 2 Kings xvii. 24-34.

² Ezra iv. 2-6.

frequented: yet women from the neighboring hamlets, and laborers in the fields near by, made use of it; and now and then one would come all the way from Shechem, to get a jar of the cool, clear water which had been blessed by the patriarch. So it happened, that, soon after Jesus had taken his seat at the well-side, a Samaritan woman, who perhaps was on her way home from her morning's work in the fields, stopped at the well to fill her water-pot. So little was the well used, that there was no common bucket there; and the stranger, who had nothing to draw with, begged of her a drink of water.

Now, the woman, perceiving that he was a Jew, could not help expressing her surprise that he should be willing to ask a favor of a Samaritan. For how could she imagine that this tired, thirsty traveller had come to do away the antipathies of race and the disputes of religion, through the spirit of humanity and the ministry of love; and that this simple request for a drink of water, from one brought up to hate her nation, was itself a token of the new gospel of peace and love? Instead of taking up her taunt about Jews and Samaritans, Jesus mildly answered, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."¹

These words were a puzzle. *What* water could the stranger

¹ John iv. 10.

mean? Not out of the well; for it is deep, and he has nothing to draw with, and could not even get a drink for himself. Does he perhaps know of some better fountain? or has he power, like Moses, to make water gush out of the rock? Is he greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well? Could there be any better water than this? and what is the living water that the stranger speaks of? It did not help her puzzle when Jesus went on to say, "Who-soever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."¹ As water satisfies thirst, so what Jesus had to give — the truth, the grace, the love, of his Father — would quench those longings of the soul for good, which often burn like the thirst of fever; and would supply motives, feelings, hopes, consolations, joys, that, like a spring bubbling up within the soul, should be a source of life and satisfaction that could never be exhausted. This water more than satisfies thirst: it prevents it, and suppresses the longing after happiness by a fulness of peace that leaves nothing to be desired. When once the soul is rightly opened toward God, and draws its life from his Spirit, it does not need to go hunting the world for happiness, seeking it in nature, in science, in art, in money, in pleasures, in fashion, in change,

¹ John iv. 13, 14.

and crying, "Who will show me any good?" but it has its blessedness within, and is so full of the spirit of good, that it sees good in every thing, gets good from every thing, and does good to all. This is the fountain within, that never fails.

All this, so easy for us now to understand as the meaning of Christ's words, and so true and beautiful to those who have felt it, was more and more a mystery to the woman at the well; and she could only stammer out, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." Glad enough would she be to get such a relief from care and work, from trouble and pain, as would come from never feeling thirst again! But the true relief must be inward, and the living water could spring up in the soul only through faith; and so it was necessary to open her eyes in some way to the wants of her soul, and to inspire confidence in Jesus as a spiritual teacher. Puzzled as she was about this "living water," she had begun to see something in the stranger's look and manner, as well as in his words, that marked him for no common man, and made her so eager to listen, that she set down her water-pot, and quite forgot her errand at the well. Pausing in the conversation, Jesus now told her to go and call her husband. This seemed to her simply as if he wanted a witness before telling the secret of the living water. But she soon found that it was a way of getting at the secrets of her life, and showing her how much



THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA

she needed an inward spiritual peace; for, when she turned aside the question, Jesus showed her that he knew how irregular her life had been, and how evil it then was. Startled that a perfect stranger could thus read her character, and filled with awe at his solemn and searching manner, she exclaimed, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet."

But it is not pleasant to talk over our faults; and so, turning off from the facts of her own life, which troubled her conscience, she asked his opinion on a dispute about holy places between the Jews and the Samaritans. "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."¹ And now this woman, blindly feeling after the true religion, has stumbled upon the very question that Jesus had come to solve, — *How* weak, erring, sinful men can approach God with worship, and find him a Father? Altars, temples, sacred places, had their uses in days of ignorance, but now had had their day, and were not worth contending about. The spirit, not the place, makes the worship; and a holy heart will make all places holy. For God is spirit: he is not a form, an image, shut up in a temple, not a body confined to some one sacred spot. His nature, his essence, is spirit. He is a being of thought and feeling; and we must worship him with thought and feeling, with the homage of

¹ John iv. 19.

our spirits, with the love of our hearts. He is a Father; and we must come to him with the spirit of children, full of gentleness, love, obedience, reverence: then, it does not matter whether we are on the mountain, or in the temple. God sees the heart; he looks through all forms and places; he knows who worship him in spirit and in truth, with a true spiritual feeling of dependence, of gratitude, of love, and with a true spiritual desire to be holy. This doctrine of God as spirit, first taught to the Jews, is now to go forth as the salvation of the world, till men shall worship the Father as children of one family, the children of light, of truth, and of love.

This sublime doctrine of Jesus concerning God first fell upon the ears of a solitary, sinful woman of a race that the Jews despised and shunned. It woke in her mind all that she had heard of a great prophet that should come from heaven,—the Messiah, the Christ, who should tell all things. And, while she was thus musing, Jesus said to her, “I that speak unto thee am he.”¹ He had not given that name to the Pharisees when they demanded his authority for cleansing the temple; he had not told it to Nicodemus when he called him “a teacher come from God;” he had not used it as his title or as a sign of faith when the multitudes were baptized by his disciples; he had not even breathed it into the ear of the disciples themselves. He chose the most

¹ John iv. 26.

simple, silent way of making known himself, his doctrine, his salvation. He came to do away with the prejudice of race; and he revealed his Father first to a Samaritan. He came to do away with forms and superstitions; and he, a Jew, fresh from Jerusalem and from the temple, here, beneath the open sky, and beside the holy mountain of the Samaritans, proclaimed God "the Father of all human spirits." He came to take away the degradation of woman; and it was to a woman who was almost an outcast that he first revealed himself as the Christ. He came to save sinners; and to this erring, sinful stranger he offered the water of life. The disciples, coming up at this moment, were amazed to find him talking with the woman; for, though women were much more respected among the Jews than by other Eastern nations, the sacred mysteries of religion were thought to be above their reach; and by some of the rabbis it was even forbidden to teach the law to a woman.¹ But the disciples had learned to revere Jesus too much to ask him why he preached to such a hearer. Indeed, he began to preach to them in a way that showed them to be as much below him in spiritual things as they could suppose the Samaritan to be. They had left him weary, and faint for food: they had hurried back with provision. They found him teaching; and, when they urged

¹ "He who instructs his daughter in the law is as one who plays the fool." Tract Solz; see in Tholuck, John.

him to eat, he gave the strange answer, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of."

As, in giving living water to the woman, he had forgotten his own thirst, so, in his eagerness to proclaim the gospel, he forgot his hunger, and was so strengthened and sustained by spiritual thoughts and feelings that he could say, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." Pointing to the fields where the grain was slowly ripening, he commanded his disciples to begin their work as reapers in the harvest of souls. Already this was before them; for the excited woman, running to the city, had told everybody of the wonderful stranger, asking, "Is not this the Christ?" and now she was hurrying back, with the whole town after her, eager to hear and judge for themselves. And, so gracious and wonderful were the words of Jesus, that these Samaritans believed upon this Jewish stranger, and said, "This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Yes, indeed, the Saviour, at once all-sympathizing and all-suffering, coming so near to us by sharing our weakness, bringing us so near to himself by giving us his strength; now, weary, hungry, thirsty, sending his disciples for food, and craving drink of a stranger; and yet having within him strength and life for the whole sinking, dying race of men. What divine love and grace sit upon the brow of the weary, fainting man! What human weakness and sympathy convey "the gift of God!"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MOB AT NAZARETH.

AT Shechem Jesus performed no miracles: yet many of the Samaritans, simply upon hearing him talk, believed in him, and acknowledged him to be the Christ. But the Pharisees at Jerusalem, and the Jews everywhere, demanded “a sign,” insisted that he should work miracles; and even then they would not believe. The trouble with the Jews was, that a fixed political idea had pretty much taken the place of religion, and — as we must constantly keep in mind in the story of Jesus’ life — their hopes and wishes for the Messiah were, that he would come as a king, and drive the Romans out of the country, and set up the Jewish throne again, with such splendor as it had in the days of Solomon.¹

¹ Dr. Schauffler once said to me in Constantinople, “The Greeks are the least hopeful of all the races we have to deal with: the great obstacle to their conversion is *Constantinople*.” He meant that the Greeks still dream of their old empire of Byzantium, and hope one day to win Constantinople from the Turks. But for this they must depend upon Russia; and, since Russia is the head of the Greek Church, they must remain true to their church. This political hope has become a chief

And so, because Jesus came of a poor family, and went about on foot, and did not try to get up an insurrection, nor to raise an army, and preached that they should repent, and lead holy lives, they were slow to hear his doctrine about the "kingdom of heaven." A strong and showy kingdom on earth, with Jerusalem as its capital, would have suited them much better. The Jews had turned all the prophecies of their Bible into this political channel, and had covered the simple spiritual teaching of their law with all sorts of traditions that took the life out of it.¹ But the Samaritans had none of these political hopes for themselves, and no such worldly notions about the Christ who was to come. They looked for him as a great and perfect teacher ; and so their hearts were more open to the words of Jesus, and he, though a Jew, found more favor with them than with his own countrymen. This was soon shown at Nazareth.

Not long after his visit at Shechem, Jesus returned to the home of his childhood. On the way he stopped at Cana, article of their religious faith. Just so it was with the Jews in the time of Christ. They looked for a Messiah to restore the kingdom to Israel.

¹ It was natural that around the laws that were written in the Pentateuch, there should grow up a body of customs, interpretations, and decisions, which came to be looked upon as a part of the divine law itself. These were known as the "Oral Law ;" and many scribes set these commentaries above the statute-law itself. Hence Jesus said, "Ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your traditions" (Matt. xv. 6).

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THE SYNAGOGUE AT NAZARETH

where he had performed his first miracle, — turning water into wine. While he was there, a nobleman who lived at Capernaum, about sixteen miles distant, whose son was very ill, came to Jesus to beg that he would go and heal him ; for he had heard of the miracles that Jesus had wrought at Jerusalem. After testing a while the nobleman's faith, Jesus told him, that, if he would go home, he should find his son cured. Trusting in the word and the power of Jesus, the nobleman hastened home. On the way his servants met him with the good news that his child was well ; and he found that he began to recover at the very time when Jesus had said that he would live. The news of this wonder, as well as of all the wonders he had done in Jerusalem, went before him to Nazareth ; and, when he reached his home, the people expected great things of their townsman.

The very next sabbath gave everybody an opportunity to hear the teaching of Jesus. Though the temple of Jerusalem was the chief place of worship for the whole nation, and the only place for sacrifices, every town had a synagogue, where on the sabbath day prayers were offered, and the books of Moses and the prophets were read. At the upper end of the synagogue, which always faced toward Jerusalem, were raised seats for the scribes and Pharisees, the rulers, and other chief men. In front of these was a platform with a little desk, or pulpit, at which the minister stood to read the prayers and the Scriptures. The books of the law and

of the prophets were divided into sections ; and one of each was read every sabbath, and then explained by the reader or some other capable person. The chief minister, or reader, had assistants who could take his place in his absence, or could assist in the services when he was present. Sometimes the minister would call upon others who had a good name for wisdom or piety, or upon distinguished strangers, to come up to the platform, and read. And so it was that Jesus was singled out ; and, after the law had been read, was invited to read the lesson from the prophets. The lesson for the day was exactly what he would wish to say about the work that he had now begun as a new prophet, or teacher : “ The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind ; to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”¹ The book was written upon parchment, in the form of a roll, tied around with ribbons ; so, when Jesus had finished reading, he rolled this up again, and handed it to the minister to put back into its place. It was the custom for teachers to sit while giving instruction ; and Jesus took his seat, and began to speak upon the words that he had read. All eyes were fastened upon him ; there was a breathless stillness in the house ; and, as he went on to show

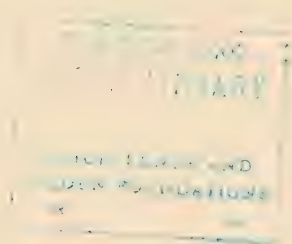
¹ Isa. lxi. 1.

how these sayings should now come to pass, everybody was filled with wonder and admiration at his tender and gracious words. What he said at the beginning is not reported; but, from all that we do know of his preaching, we may suppose that he spoke of comfort for the sorrowing, of mercy for the penitent, of deliverance for the oppressed, of help for the needy, of light for the ignorant, of peace for the troubled; and promised such blessings as these to all who should truly love and trust and serve his Father in heaven. This was good news indeed: it put new life and meaning into words that from childhood every one had heard read in the synagogue; and it kindled a hope that the kingdom of the Messiah might even come in their day. But, though their hearts were stirred for a moment by these spiritual feelings, their minds began to yield to doubts; and their very wonder that Joseph's son should speak in such a way gave place to the question, by what right *he* should make such promises. "So, then," they began to say in their hearts, "if he is able to talk in this way, and if he takes it upon him to make such promises, let him show us one proof that he is right; let him do such wonders here as we have heard of his doing in other places. Let him give like honor to his own city."

Though no one said this aloud, Jesus knew what they were all thinking of; and he resolved to see how far they would accept the plain spiritual meaning of their own Bible, and would obey the truth that spoke directly to

their souls, and which no miracle could make more true or plain. He had set before them the true kingdom of God, and they had shown that they felt his words. He had told them of grace, mercy, peace, salvation; and now he would know whether, like the Samaritans, they really wished and prized such gifts of heaven, or had only a curiosity to see him do some strange thing. This he had a right to demand of the people of Nazareth. He had been brought up among them: they knew all about his life and character from childhood. They needed no testimony concerning himself; and they were able to judge in their own minds and hearts of the truth of what he said. They had already praised his "gracious words;" but he knew well enough that they wished him to flatter their pride, to set them above their neighbors, and to display his power for the honor of their city.

What he had said was wonderful; and if only he would DO wonders, so as to draw the whole country to Nazareth to see and hear their great Teacher and Prophet, they would be ready to claim him as the Christ. Now, Jesus wanted no such fame and no such followers. He wanted to draw men to his Father for the love of truth and goodness, to draw their hearts away from sin, to make their lives better, nobler, purer; and to draw them to himself *because* he taught them to be just and true and good. But he knew how such teaching had always been rejected by his countrymen; how





JOSEPH DUNAND.

G. FERRILLON.

proud they were to be called the people of God, yet how unwilling to live as the children of God; how they boasted of Abraham as their father, read the law of Moses, and sang the songs of David, yet had beaten and killed the prophets. And so, instead of doing wonders for them, he reminded them that "no prophet is accepted in his own country;" and that God had often sent special blessings to those who were not of Israel, as to the widow of Sarepta¹ and to Naaman the Syrian.² At these words the whole assembly started up in a rage. A moment before, they had not words enough to praise Jesus; they felt proud of Joseph's son, and were looking to the great honor he should bring to the town; but instead of humoring their fancies, and showing them signs from heaven, he had openly slighted his townsmen, and had offered to do for outsiders, and even for heathen, what he would not do for them.

It takes but little to kindle a mob to fury when once the fire is started. Nobody stopped to think of the synagogue, or of the sabbath; nobody spoke up for the good life of Jesus among them; nobody remembered the good words he had just spoken; nobody thought of his right to be heard and judged by the law. They were filled with rage: they rushed upon him, and dragged him out of the synagogue; the crowd pushing, shouting, yelling, cursing, drove him through the streets and out of the city, till they came to the edge of the hill.

¹ 1 Kings xvii. 9.

² 2 Kings v.

At Rome, it was the custom to throw certain criminals from a steep side of the hill upon which the Capitol was built, that they might be dashed to pieces on the rocks below. The Jews appear to have had a like custom ; and the mob at once took up the idea of getting rid of Jesus in this way. But, as a mob acts without reason, some little thing may turn it from its purpose as quickly as it was started at the first ; or some sudden fear, pity, remorse, or even a whim, may cause it at the last moment to halt, to change about, or to disperse as easily as it ran together ; and when a mob begins to waver, or its leaders show signs of hesitation, its power has gone by. At such a moment, coolness and firmness may save a man from sudden violence ; and a decided word or look may put to shame those who were crying out for his life. Mirabeau, the idol of the people, the master of the assembly, the saviour of France, awoke one morning to see the avenues leading from his house to the Hall of Deputies filled with angry crowds, who were hooting his name as a traitor, and threatening to hang him on a tree. Against the entreaties of his friends, he went out among them, saying, "I shall return triumphant, or piecemeal ;" and he so awed the mob by his bearing that he passed through them unharmed.

The consul Marius, once the idol of Rome, when in the fall of his fortunes, an exile and outlaw, he was dragged with a rope around his neck to be beheaded, saved his life

by fixing his eye upon the executioner, and saying, "Slave! dost thou dare to kill Marius?" The soldier who had just volunteered to kill him threw down his sword, and fled; and Marius lived to be again loaded with honors by his countrymen.

Napoleon, on landing in France from Elba, disarmed the troops sent to oppose him, by simply showing himself as their old emperor.

It need cause no surprise, that the story of that fierce mob at Nazareth ends with the simple statement that "Jesus, passing through the midst of them, went his way." The majesty that shone in his countenance, so full of innocence, of truth, and of grace, the light that could flash from his eye such rebukes of passion and wrong, tamed the fury of his enemies so that they opened a way for him, and let him pass unharmed.

CHAPTER XXII.

HIS LIFE AT CAPERNAUM.

THE mob at Nazareth was a turning-point in the life of Jesus. His heart was set upon doing good to everybody, and first of all to his countrymen. He had a strange power over nature, over diseases, over devils; and this power he was ready to use for healing and blessing his fellow-men, but never for showing off wonders to make a name or party for himself. He had a knowledge of truth and of God, so deep, so full, so pure, that its light would banish error and sin, and would show the way of life; and this knowledge he was ready to give to every man who was willing to believe and obey the truth. But he would not set himself up as a prophet for the vanity of any sect or place or people. Now, his works at Jerusalem had roused the jealousy of the rulers and the Pharisees; and his words at Nazareth had roused the fury of the mob. His first attempts at doing good by healing and by teaching had brought his own life in danger: he had been warned from the capital, he had been driven from his home. “He came unto his own, and his own received

him not.”¹ Where, then, should he go to preach his gospel? Where should he do his works of mercy? There were three or four disciples who already loved him better than his own brothers; and the most natural thought was, to go to the home of these friends, who, poor as they were, were ready to give him all they had in the world. Probably on quitting Samaria, after they had crossed the great plain of Esdraelon, and had come as far as Cana together, where Jesus turned aside to the home of his parents, Peter, Andrew, Philip, and Nathanael kept on a day’s journey farther to Bethsaida, where they lived, to look after their fishing. The nobleman whose son he had just healed lived within a mile or two of Bethsaida; and, as he could count upon him also as a friend, he went directly to Capernaum, and, as it proved, made this for more than two years his home, where he gathered his disciples, delivered many of his parables and discourses, and performed many of his mighty works.

A walk of a few hours north-east from Nazareth would bring Jesus to the shore of Gennesareth, the loveliest lake of Palestine, which lies in a deep basin among the hills, and is thirteen miles long by six miles in breadth at its widest part. As compared with the English lakes, with the lakes of Zürich, Luzerne, Geneva, or Wallenstadt, in Switzerland, or with Lake George, Winnipisiogee, or Moosehead, in the

¹ John i. 11.

United States, Gennesareth as it now appears would not be striking either for grandeur or for beauty. The hills on the eastern side, and also on the lower half of the western, are steep and rough, forming a rocky wall from eight hundred to one thousand feet high, with a strip of beach between this and the water; but toward the upper end of the lake, on the western side, the hills are more gentle and sloping, and set back farther from the water, leaving a margin of beautiful and fertile plains, one of which is three miles long by more than a mile in breadth, and once had the same name with the lake. Nowadays this plain of Gennesareth is covered with the ruins of a row of towns that then lined the shore so closely as to form almost one continuous settlement, and which stretched on even to the head of the lake where the Jordan enters it. The few poor natives who yet live upon the plain do little to keep up its old fertility; but the splendid crops of grain from the little patches that are cultivated, the luxuriant grass and flowers, and even the very weeds, show how rich the soil is by nature, and how favorable the climate; so that we can almost share the ecstasy of Josephus, who looked upon it as a second Garden of Eden. Here is his picture of this fairy plain. "Extending along the Lake of Gennesareth, and bearing also its name, lies a tract of country admirable both for its natural properties and its beauty. Such is the fertility of the soil, that it rejects no plant; and accordingly all are here cultivated by the hus-

bandman. For so genial is the air that it suits every variety. The walnut, which delights beyond other trees in a wintry climate, grows luxuriantly where also is the palm-tree, which is nourished by heat; and near to these are figs and olives, to which a milder atmosphere has been assigned. One might style this an ambitious effort of Nature, doing violence to herself in bringing together plants of discordant habits; and an amiable rivalry of the seasons, each, as it were, asserting her right to the soil: for it not only possesses the extraordinary virtue of nourishing fruits of opposite climes, but also maintains a continual supply of them. Thus it produces those most royal of all, the grape and the fig, during ten months without intermission, while the other varieties ripen the whole year through; for, besides being favored by the genial temperature of the air, it is irrigated by a highly fertilizing spring called Capernaum by the people of the country.”¹

This mixture of climates and of seasons is owing to the fact that the lake lies in a gorge nearly six hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean; and at times the rays of the sun make it like a boiling caldron, while at other times it is fanned by cool breezes from the snows of Mount Lebanon. Besides, this was once a region of volcanoes. The soil is a dark loam from rocks of basalt; and toward the southern end of the lake, on the west side, there are hot

¹ Josephus: *The Jewish War*, iii. 8.

springs, which smell strongly of sulphur. Like all volcanic soils, this is naturally fertile; and along the shore are springs that seem never to fail, and that make the land rich with a tropical verdure. Indigo, melons, grapes, wheat, millet, grow in the fields; the lote, or nettle-tree, springs up among the rocks; and palm-trees spread their leafy fans above the garden-walls. The natural beauty of the lake was what Josephus described it, in the time of Christ; and its borders were then lined with a busy population, made up of all classes and all nations. Near the hot springs the large and showy city of Tiberias had lately been built; and at the head of the lake the city of Julias, on the eastern side of the Jordan. These were places of fashionable resort much frequented by Jews, and by foreigners of wealth and rank. So long as Tiberias was the capital of Galilee, a large mixed population crowded its walls, and the villas of noblemen adorned its suburbs. And, in fact, the western shore of Gennesareth was just then the most thickly-settled part of Palestine, and had even a greater variety of people than Jerusalem itself; and Capernaum was its business centre.

Here were fishermen and sailors along the coast, traders and artisans of all sorts in the towns, farmers and peasants in the country round about. Here were merchants from foreign nations passing to and fro; the Arabian Gentiles from east of the Jordan, and the Phœnician Gentiles from the Mediterranean coast, mixing with the Jewish

traffickers and money-changers. Here were Roman soldiers, tax-gatherers, officers, and noblemen. Every grade and mixture of society was to be found at Capernaum. It was a place in which to preach the gospel to all peoples; and the door was already open. Here was a synagogue; but scribes and Pharisees were few, and in such an easy-going community they had much less influence than at Jerusalem. Here, as everywhere, the Jews were looking for their Messiah; but as they were not mixed up with the political and religious parties and strifes of Jerusalem, and were more free and open in their opinions and ways, they cared less about the Messiah as a king, and were more ready to listen to the spiritual teaching of Jesus. Instead of seeking, by the lake-side, a place of seclusion where he could be safe from persecution, Jesus went to Capernaum as a busy hive of men and affairs, where he could preach to all classes, each in its own way, — to the farmer, of the seed and the tares, of the flowers and grass of the field, and the birds of the air; to the fisherman, of his net cast into the sea; to the centurion, of his servants; to the merchant, of his goodly pearls. Here he could always find hearers, and, while busy in the work of teaching, could easily provide the little he required for his own support. Thus the district of Gennesareth, with its five or six villages, and its neighboring lake and hills, became the seat of that kingdom which Jerusalem and Nazareth had rejected. And

so an old saying of the prophet was fulfilled, "The land of Zabulon and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up."¹

Thus far we have traced the life of Jesus step by step, from one point to another, in the natural order of events and changes. This was necessary in order to get clearly before us the facts of his history, as these bring out his character and work. But from his settlement at Capernaum, which was called "his own city," it is not so much the places and circumstances of his life, that will interest us, as the life itself, — his teachings, his works, his followers, his enemies, his sufferings, and his death.

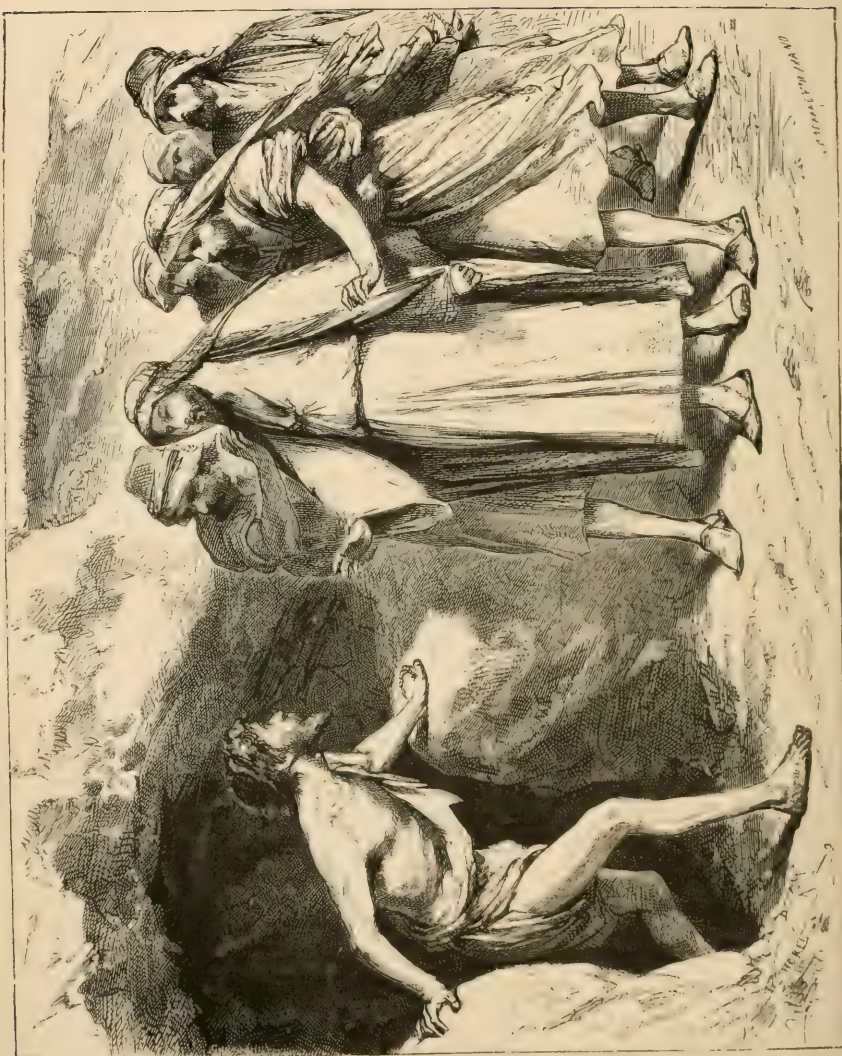
Jesus had no relatives in Capernaum, and no house that he could call his own. But he soon made friends; and so long as he remained in the city he never wanted for a home. The Jews were taught to look up with respect to a teacher of religion; and, such was their reverence for the office of a prophet, that they would gladly do any service for one whom they supposed to be really sent from God. They were accustomed by gifts of money, food, &c., to support the scribes as teachers of the law; and pupils, or disciples, expected to provide for the personal wants of their masters; though some of the greatest rabbis among the Jews sup-

¹ Isa. ix. 2.

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ported themselves by a trade, just as Paul, while preaching at Corinth, earned his living by working at his trade of tent-making. As Jesus was now recognized as a public teacher, and was even looked up to by some as a prophet, there were many in Capernaum who would open their houses or their purses to supply his necessities; some, out of gratitude for a favor done to a member of the family or to a friend, by the healing power of Jesus; others, for the honor of receiving such a guest; and others, like the plain, honest fishermen who were the first to believe on him, for the love they had for him, and the blessing they found in his society and in his teachings. It was not long before he brought to Capernaum the fame that his townsmen of Nazareth had wished for themselves, but had lost by being too eager and too worldly in their wishes.

The people of Capernaum were not slow to profit by the wonderful stranger who had come to make his home among them. Whenever Jesus appeared in public, a crowd followed him to hear what he would say, and see what he would do. If he went out to walk along the shore of the lake, the people ran after him, and pressed upon him in such numbers that he was often obliged to take refuge in a boat, and to use this as a stand for preaching.¹ It was in this way that he delivered the parables of the sower, the tares, the grain of mustard-seed, the leaven hidden in the meal,

¹ Luke v. 1-4.

the seed cast into the ground, and many other discourses that are not reported even in outline.¹ Sometimes, to escape the crowd, and gain a little rest for himself, or an opportunity to talk privately with his disciples, he would cross the lake from Capernaum to the thinly-settled country on the other side; and it was in such excursions that he performed the miracles of stilling the tempest, and of walking upon the sea.² But the people would not suffer him to be alone; and, if they saw him go away in a boat, they would quickly get together all the fishing-boats of the town, and sail after him, or would run along the shore on foot to meet him wherever he might land. Once, when he had been hurried and driven by so many coming and going that he had no time even to eat, he tried to get away with his disciples to a desert place, to rest a while. He took a boat privately, and sailed over to the north-eastern corner of the lake, on the other side of the River Jordan. But he was observed by some of the villagers, who spread the news; and such crowds ran after him from all the towns along the shore, that over five thousand were soon gathered to beg him to preach to them, and to heal the sick.³ These were people who were just ready to start in a caravan for the Passover at Jerusalem; and so they could easily be set in motion by the chance of seeing and hearing the great prophet; and Jesus,

¹ Matt. xiii. 1-37; Mark iv. 1-34.

² Matt. viii. 18-27; xiv. 24-33.

³ Mark vi. 32-35.





THE WOMAN WHO TOUCHED HIS GARMENT.

weary and hungry as he was, gave hours to teaching and healing them, and then provided bread to feed them before sending them away.

During all his residence at Capernaum, he was accustomed to teach on the sabbath in the synagogue ; and there he gave his wonderful discourse upon the true bread, and eating his flesh and drinking his blood.¹ And it was at Capernaum and in the neighborhood, that he performed the greater part of the miracles which are recorded in the Gospel history. Here he cured the blind and the dumb,² those who had palsy,³ and those who were lunatics, or were possessed of devils.⁴ He cured Peter's wife's mother of a fever,⁵ and a woman that for twelve years had an issue of blood, that no doctor could remedy ;⁶ he healed great numbers who were sick of all sorts of diseases ;⁷ and he brought back the daughter of Jairus to life.⁸ The report of these miracles spread so far that a great multitude came to him from Galilee, and from Judea down as far as Jerusalem. And not only did those of his own nation, who were always looking for a Messiah, thus rush after this new teacher ; but from the east of the Jordan, and from the coast of the Mediterranean, came numbers who, though half Pagan in their religion, yet had faith and hope enough to seek the

¹ John vi. 26. ² Mark ix. 27-34. ³ Matt. viii. 5-13; Mark i. 1-12.

⁴ Mark i. 21-34. ⁵ Mark i. 31. ⁶ Mark v. 25. ⁷ Luke iv. 40.

⁸ Mark v. 38-43.

great prophet of Israel.¹ And, besides these miracles of mercy for the direct benefit of the afflicted, he also performed here wonders upon nature, that manifested to his disciples his power and majesty, and confirmed their faith in him as the Son of God; as, when he caused the fish to fill their nets,² and again caused a fish to bring up in its mouth money to pay their taxes,³ and, above all, when he walked to them upon the raging sea.⁴

But in this busy, hurried life, crowded and driven by the cares and the wants of thousands from near and far, Jesus still found time for that pleasant social intercourse in which he delighted to show the friendliness of his own nature, and the genial spirit of his religion. Thus one day we find him at dinner in the house of Simon the Pharisee;⁵ and, another, at a great feast given in his honor by Levi the publican;⁶ and again we read of his going from house to house as a welcome guest.

From time to time, he made excursions from Capernaum to neighboring towns and villages, preaching and healing as he went. Three times he made a wide circuit through Galilee, once crossing the border into the region of Tyre and Sidon; and again he made an extensive tour on the eastern side of the Jordan, and far up to the north.

When the weather would permit of his living and sleep-

¹ Mark iii. 7-12.

² Luke v. 1-7.

³ Matt. xvii. 24-27.

⁴ Matt. xiv. 24-33.

⁵ Luke vii. 36.

⁶ Luke v. 29-32.

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HE EATS WITH PUBLICANS AND SINNERS.

ing in the open air, he loved to slip away into the country back of Capernaum, and in the solitude of the mountains to rest, to meditate, and to pray. It was on his return from one of his journeys in Galilee, which he always made on foot, and while he had gone apart into a mountain with only his twelve disciples, that the people, finding out where he was, crowded about him in immense multitudes, and he preached to them the Sermon on the Mount.¹

In Capernaum he selected the persons who should be the special preachers of his gospel, — the twelve who were with him as a family,² and whom he made his apostles, and the seventy whom he sent two and two to prepare the way in every city and place which he intended to visit in person.³ And thus it came to pass, that neither Bethlehem, the place where the Son of David was born; nor Nazareth, where he was brought up as the carpenter's son; nor Jerusalem, where he was put to death because he made himself the "Son of God," and "the King of the Jews;" but a small fishing and trading town near the head of Lake Tiberias, busy enough with its own affairs, and full of the stir of a mixed and changing population, yet quite remote from the political excitements and the religious strifes of the capital, — this thriving, bustling, worldly seaport Capernaum was "exalted to heaven" as the earthly centre of the kingdom of God, the place where Jesus spent most of his active life, did most

¹ Luke vi. 12-49² Matt. x. 1-42.³ Luke x. 1-16.

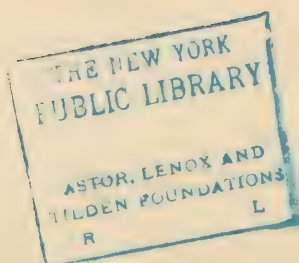
of his mighty works, and uttered those discourses which, more than any others, define his rules of life here, and the way to life hereafter;¹ the place where he announced himself as the Saviour of the world, and appointed his messengers to go forth in his name, proclaiming the kingdom of heaven. What an earnest, active life was this of Jesus in his two years at Capernaum! How much was compressed into it, of communion with his Father through the beauties and glories of the natural world, and by special meditation and prayer; how much of thought and of wisdom in instruction to the people; how much of counsel and of patience in training and guiding his disciples! And how much went out from that life!—how much of sympathy for the suffering and the sorrowing; how much of benevolence for the poor, the sick, the infirm; how much of kindness for neighbors, for strangers, and for children; how much of light for the ignorant and the erring; how much of truth for the inquiring and the believing; how much of love for all sorts and conditions of men; how much of mercy and of hope for a sinful world; how much of power, of glory, and of majesty for the Church that was to be!

But pride, bigotry, jealousy, could not let him alone. His influence with the people stirred the envy of their religious rulers; his plain dealing with formalism and hypocrisy roused their rage. The leaders at Jerusalem, who claimed

¹The Sermon on the Mount, and the discourse on the bread of life.



I WILL MAKE YOU FISHERS OF MEN.



a supervision over all schools and synagogues, sent spies to watch Jesus at Capernaum, and to report his sayings and doings. When he healed a man who was sick of the palsy, and at the same time forgave his sins, the scribes and Pharisees charged him with blasphemy, a sin which by Jewish law was to be punished with death. When he cast out devils, while the common people marvelled, and said, "It was never so seen in Israel," the Pharisees mocked, and called this only a trick of the Devil himself.¹ They tried to raise a quarrel with him about the traditions of the elders,² and in other ways to get some pretext for bringing him to trial. And, what to his tender and loving spirit was far keener than the hatred of the Pharisees, the common people, who ran after him to see his miracles, and who at first listened with wonder to his teaching, by degrees fell away when they found how strict and searching were his doctrines, how deep and spiritual his demands upon the lives of his followers. The attempt to put his religion into practice as a religion of self-sacrifice showed how many had followed him "to eat of the loaves," to get some present good for themselves or their friends; and so when he saw that few were led by his preaching to repent, and lead holy lives, he said with bitter sorrow, "Thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for, if the mighty works which have been done in thee had

¹ Matt. ix. 34.² Mark vii. 1-23.

been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day." And to-day the traveller stumbles upon a few heaps of stones and rubbish lying here and there along the western shore of Gennesareth, but, after all his searching, is left in doubt where Capernaum was.¹ Capernaum lives only in remembrance as the city where Jesus dwelt; but there was no need of human monuments to keep him in remembrance at that spot. He took possession of the gem of Palestine, and wrought this into his life, and made it immortal. The deep, clear blue of the lake still reflects the deep blue of the sky, like a mirror of the truth that he brought from heaven; the air rises from its bosom soft and genial with the peace that he breathed over it, or comes from the neighboring hills fresh and healing with his benedictions of mercy; the flowers along the shore are brilliant with the beauty with which he clothed them, and fragrant with his grace; the very murmuring of the waters upon the pebbly beach is musical with his words of love. The races and the places among which he lived have passed away; the fields and the shores are forsaken and desolate; trade, fishing, husbandry, synagogue, and citadel, all the industries and occupations of life, the traces of war, and even the tokens of history, have vanished. But Nature remains true to her sacred trust, holds this the most dear and hallowed spot

¹ It is still in dispute whether Khan Minyeh or Tell Hum. See Robinson, Stanley, Thomson.

of earth, — the scene of a divine love, lowly and self-sacrificing, but as yet unstained by sorrow ; and by every voice of sea and air, of hill and sky, she utters the name of JESUS.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

ALWAYS ready to preach when any were ready to hear, Jesus would preach just where he happened to find the people; whether this was in the porch of the temple at Jerusalem, on the highway by Jericho, in the synagogue when one was at hand and open, on the shore of the lake as he was walking, or on the side of a hill where he had gone to seek a little repose. He had no college to which pupils must come to learn his doctrines, no church to which men must go to hear his discourses; but, as often as anywhere, he preached in some chance spot and in the open air, just because he had the people around him, and was moved to do them good. It was in this simple, natural way that he gave that wonderful sermon which no philosophy nor eloquence has ever approached, and which, till the end of time, shall serve as the text of the highest wisdom, virtue, and piety for human life. The hills furnished his pulpit; the birds, the grass, the lilies, the fields, the trees, the rocks, the thorns, the thistles, gave his illustrations.

A little south of the plain of Gennesareth, there is a break in the hills that run around the border of the lake; and another plain sets off toward the south-west, at an angle of which, about four miles distant, is a ridge some forty feet high, ending in a broad platform with two knobs, or horns, like the bow of a saddle. As approached from the east, the highest of these horns is hardly seventy feet above the table-land; but from the northern side it looks high enough to be called a mountain; so that this would give all the features of the story of the "Sermon on the Mount."

On a mild, quiet evening, Jesus, wishing to be alone for meditation, stole out of the city, and walked to this hill, and there spent the whole night alone in prayer.¹ But his disciples found out where he had gone; and early the next morning they, and crowds of people after them, hurried out to meet him. Seeing this eager multitude, Jesus first called twelve of his disciples by name to come up to the point of the hill where he was; and there he set them apart to be his apostles, and gave them power to heal the sick, and to cast out devils.² Then, coming down with them from the horn of the hill, he stood on the broad, level summit, where the people pressed upon him with the sick of all sorts, whom they had brought with them to be healed. These he cured either by his word or by his touch. After this he began to teach. But the crowd was too great for comfort; and he

¹ Luke vi. 12-19.

² Mark iii. 13-15.

stepped back a little up the hillside, and took a seat where everybody could see and hear.

Now all was still. Not a breath stirred the lake ; not a sound broke the air. The hum of the city was too distant to be heard ; and, indeed, the city had almost emptied itself into the fields. The fishermen had left their nets on the shore ; the farmers had quit their work in the plain ; even the birds had ceased their morning song, and were quietly nestling in groves, or picking up their food in the corn. As Jesus looked over the plain below, the sun was kindling the bright colors of the lily and the oleander against the gray shadows of the olive and the deep green of the fig, and weaving a thin mist of purple over the blue of the sea. Away to the north the snowy top of Hermon was glittering with the glory of the morning ; and, like the white walls and towers of Safed to-day, the “city set upon a hill” was shining from afar.

The first word that broke this silence seemed an echo of the peace and the beauty of nature, a benediction from heaven upon the scene, — Blessed ! *Blessed !* BLESSED ! seven times repeated, as if the strain of the angels at the birth of Jesus, “Peace on earth, good-will to men,” were now brought out with the full octave, covering the whole scale of men’s conditions, wants, desires, hopes, capacities, from the depth of poverty, of hunger, of sorrow, and of sin, up through comfort, possession, fulness, peace, to the height of

blessedness in seeing God as his children. Blessed, seven times *blessed*! for all these blessings shall come to the same gentle, loving, trusting soul, shall come to each and every soul that lives in Me. A king at his coronation gives tokens of his favor — offices, honors, titles — to a few selected friends or favorites, to princes, generals, ministers; while it is enough for the common people, that they can have a holiday, and see the show. But here was an inauguration-day, when blessings were thrown about as freely as the air, as richly as the sunlight. The kingdom of heaven was openly set up, and was offered to the poor, the mourning, the meek, to the hungry, the merciful, the pure, the peaceable, to every man who had the true feeling and desire for it, then and there to take it. And not then and there only, but now and always and everywhere is this blessing offered to whoever is in the right mind for receiving it: "Peace on earth to men of good-will," — the kingdom of heaven to the poor in spirit, the vision of God to the pure in heart. The secret of this is, that Jesus here taught men how to *make themselves blessed*, simply by being and by doing that which they ought to be and to do, — being that which every man can become, doing that which every man can perform.

But, though this secret is so simple, it seems to most men so strange, that it is seldom tried; for the conditions and the feelings which Jesus pronounced "blessed" are those that are commonly looked upon as evil and wretched, and that

people would shun, or escape from, if possible. Who nowadays thinks of praising poverty as a blessing, or wishes to be poor for the sake of being happy? There are those who seem contented in the midst of poverty, cheerful and happy though they are poor; but Jesus speaks of those who are blessed in being poor, the very spring of whose blessedness is in the fact that they are poor. "Poverty is quarrelsome," says a French proverb; and, in these times, the poor are everywhere showing signs of discontent. They are dissatisfied with their wages, dissatisfied with their homes, dissatisfied with their lot in life, and too often angrily or sulkily dissatisfied with Providence. Some are poor and envious, others poor and proud; and, instead of making the best of their condition, these really make themselves worse than their condition by their restlessness and discontent. Others are poor and troubled, making their poverty a greater care and burden by needless anxieties and fears; and some, again, are shiftless and dispirited, always in poor spirits, but not poor in spirit, as Jesus meant when he said, "Blessed are the poor."

The poverty of which he spoke may be felt by the rich and the great, and must be felt by them if they would be really blessed. The greatest king must have this feeling of poverty, or he cannot have the kingdom of heaven. But when one feels that not wealth, nor power, nor knowledge, nor office, nor friends can make his soul truly rich, but,

whatever he possesses in the world without, he must have within himself right thoughts and right feelings, and above all must have the love of God, then, just because he is so poor in spirit, he is ready to be made rich indeed. He gives up looking to outward things for real good, gives up his inward pride, vanity, and self-will; feels that he needs God to teach him, prays that God would teach him; feels that God must guide him, and wishes to have God rule him. And so the kingdom of heaven — which is the love of God dwelling in the heart, and thence the will of God ruling in the mind and in the life — becomes the possession of the spirit that just now felt itself to be poor and empty, and in want of all things. “Blessed are the poor.”

Men do not hunt after trouble and sorrow as blessings; young people never wish to mourn, nor to mix with mourners, if they can help it; and though afflictions are said to be “angels in disguise,” and to turn out blessings in the end, we would rather see the angels at the first, and have the good without the evil. Come what may of it afterwards, sorrow is sorrow, and trouble is trouble; and neither is to be wished for in itself. There is no good in grief, simply as grief; and when one mourns over his trials and losses, over the loss of property, the loss of friends, the loss of office or of home, as if these were his all, there is no blessing in his mourning, and no good can come of it. Such grief may wear itself out, but it takes no comfort. Men are right in

wishing to get rid of sorrow. Everybody was rushing to Jesus to be cured of diseases, to be rid of pains and cares and troubles. He took pity upon every sufferer, had a kind word and a deed of mercy for every one ; but, just when all were rejoicing in being free from the sorrows they had brought with them, he said, "Blessed are they that mourn!" Yes; but this mourning, like the poverty he had spoken of, must be spiritual, — the sorrow of the heart for sin and evil, the sighing of the heart after God. One may have no outward cause of sorrow, and give no outward signs of grief; may have no losses, pains, disappointments, troubles; the course of his life may run smoothly and pleasantly enough: yet if in his heart he has had sinful thoughts and wishes, if he has lived selfishly, with no true love for God or men, then all the favors of his outward life but make him the more pitiable, because of this ungrateful and unlovely spirit. But when such a one comes to see what his life has been, sees how like a prodigal he has lived, and, filled with shame and compunction, comes sorrowing to his Father, to confess his sin, then shall he be blessed indeed, — blessed not only with the forgiveness of his sins, but with the love and joy of his Father. And when once his heart has found this peace in God, no matter what trials and troubles come from without, he shall always be comforted. "Blessed are they that mourn."

It goes against the grain of most men, to bear a wrong

without resenting it, to be quiet under insult, patient under injustice or injury. Boys early learn to give angry words and blows, and think it manly to fight; and even girls are ready to answer back with spirit when they feel offended. Almost everybody looks upon meekness as only another name for weakness. Well, it is mean to be cowardly, never to stand up for honor, for truth, for right, for justice, never to speak up against a wrong, never to resist an evil person or an evil act. Jesus himself showed spirit when with a whip he drove out the traders from the temple; when with anger he rebuked the Pharisees in the synagogue; when before the mob, before the soldiers, before Pilate, he gave his reproofs and warnings, not fearing for his life. Yet Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Meekness, not malice nor might, is the true source of power against enemies, the true way to a lasting dominion over men. And what is this feeling, this habit, this disposition, so opposite to the common feeling and conduct of men, which Jesus so praised and blessed? Not a mere quiet, silent manner; for this may come of pride or of stupidity, or may hide malice or revenge. Not timidity, nor chicken-heartedness in running from danger, or in avoiding or bearing provocation; for this may come only from the nerves, or may show a lack of true principle, and regard for any thing. It is not simply a soft address; for this may show only a simpleton. And

certainly it is not a condescending way toward other people ; for that is a sign of pride. True meekness is the gentleness of spirit and of manners that grows out of the habit of governing all one's feelings and actions toward others by the law of love. It comes from a word that means to bend, to make soft, or pliable ; and when we soften our self-will, and bend this to the will of God, when we cease to make ourselves of the first importance in every thing, and to measure everybody and every thing by what they may be worth to us, or may do for us, then we shall not be likely to feel envy, jealousy, revenge, nor any sort of evil and unruly passion. We may hate wrong, and yet pity the wrong-doer ; we may oppose and rebuke injustice, and yet be patient under injuries done to ourselves. They who have this spirit, said Jesus, " shall inherit the earth." Having learned to rule their own feelings, nothing can disturb them so as to make them really unhappy. Proud, vain, envious, quarrelsome people are never happy : they are always afraid lest somebody will not notice them, or will tread on their toes, or shove them aside. But the meek, instead of pushing themselves forward, wait patiently for their turn ; and, in the mean time, are at ease in their own minds, trusting in God to do what is best for them. And, by conquering themselves, they conquer the world also ; their meekness disarms their enemies, or wears them out. Proud and passionate people are always getting into quarrels ; angry words pro-

voke angry feelings in reply. But the men who are slow to speak, and slow to wrath, who neither use threats, nor fear them, who stand quietly and firmly for the right, but do no wrong; the men who are patient and long-suffering and kind, who show that they care more for truth and right than for their own ease and safety, and that they know how to love even their enemies, — these men at the last get the victory in the world for their principles and ideas. So it has come to pass, that the martyrs of Christianity and of liberty inherit the earth through the power of their teaching and example, while their persecutors are forgotten or unknown. It is not Nero, but Paul; not Cæsar, but Jesus, — who live in the thoughts and the hearts of mankind. “Blessed are the meek.”

It is well to be hungry when a good meal is spread before one, and to be thirsty when there is a fresh, cool spring at hand. But to be hungry, and have no bread, to be thirsty, and have not a drop of water, is one of the worst forms of pining and of torture. There is no stronger appeal to sympathy than the story that one is perishing of hunger or thirst. How harrowing is the fate of persons lost in the desert, or shipwrecked and left without provision in the middle of the ocean, in an open boat! But Jesus said, “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst,” — that have within their souls a desire as longing, as burning, as consuming, as are the sensations of hunger and thirst to the body.

Yet the soul may torture itself with hungering and thirsting for nought. How many hunger and thirst for gold, for fame, for power, who never gain their desire, but all their lives long carry this fever in their veins! How often, too, the getting of wealth, of office, of honor, inflames the passion so much the more, and makes the fire burn and rage till it eats up all that is good and noble in the man! But this for which Jesus tells us to hunger and thirst is sure to come at last through the very strength and fever of the desire, and sure to fill and satisfy the soul. The earnest longing to know the right, to be right, to do right,—this God will answer with the fulness of his own truth and love. And, when the principle of living right has been formed within the soul, then by its own nature it grows and increases more and more, and fills the whole being with light, with truth, with goodness, and with joy. “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst.”

From inward feelings Jesus passed to outward acts, when, in the fifth benediction, he said, “Blessed are the merciful.” And here he did not run so contrary to the common thoughts and feelings of men as he had seemed to do when he spoke of the poor, the mourning, the meek, the hungry, as blessed; since every one feels that it is good to be kind, and is ready to praise kindness in others, though he may practise it but little himself. And almost every one has known times when he was glad to receive kindness, perhaps

to seek for mercy. But, in order to get the blessing of which Jesus speaks, we must form the habit of being merciful, and must practise kindness in daily life, toward all whom we can benefit by a kind word or a good action. Some have by nature more tenderness, more sympathy, more generosity, than others: they are easily moved to pity, or they give by impulse. Yet tears that flow so easily, and money that is so freely given, do not always prove a really kind heart; for persons of this sort may give money to get rid of misery that annoys them, or in answer to a strong appeal, when they would never go to seek the suffering, and when perhaps, in another mood, they would turn away a needy person without looking into his case. But a truly kind heart will seek to do good from the spirit of love to God and to men; will have kind feelings, kind words, kind looks, even where there is nothing that it can do for others. It will never be harsh to a debtor, nor cruel to an enemy; it will have pity for the criminal, and will succor the poor; and its kindness will not be measured by the nation, the color, the religion, the condition, of the sufferer, but will flow out to all who are in need of sympathy and help: and this because the heart itself delights in kindness. Such a one is like Jesus, who "went about doing good;" and to such he said, "Blessed are the merciful." The feeling itself is blessed; and thus every act of kindness brings its own reward. Indeed, it is one of the best remedies for sorrows

and troubles of our own, to try to help others in trouble. And this feeling keeps our hearts in sympathy with our Father in heaven, who doeth good to all. It is a spirit that he delights in, and will reward with his blessing here, and with the joy of heaven.

But those who win these blessings of Jesus—the humble, the penitent, the meek, the righteous, the merciful—need not wait for the future world to find their heaven. By such inward piety and such outward charity, Jesus taught men to make and keep their heaven within their own souls. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” To see God is the perfect bliss of heaven: it is to be where his presence is made real, is felt, is shared; where his glory is the light of the soul, and his goodness is its joy. It is to see our Father, and to partake of the blessedness of his being and his love: “they shall see his face.” But as one can see the sun in a clear lake, and enjoy his beauty and glory, and thus see heaven spread out beneath him, when the eyes could not bear to gaze upon the sun in the sky, so if the heart is full of right thoughts and good feelings, of pure and holy love, God is reflected in it, and the light and love, the glory and the peace, of heaven are there. “He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”

The heart is the seat of all moral feelings. When the heart has sorrow for sin, God comes to it with the grace of

forgiveness; when the heart is sore with troubles, God comes with the grace of consolation; when the heart is meek and patient, God comes to it with the grace of his approval; when the heart is hungering and thirsting for righteousness, God comes to it with the grace of his fulness; when the heart is loving and kind toward others, God comes to it with his own love and bounty; and, when the heart loves what is pure and holy, then it becomes so like God, that he really dwells within it as his home: and so the pure in heart see God, know God, have God. Such a heart sees God in nature as a living, loving presence; sees God in the Bible as a breathing, speaking spirit; sees God in the events of every day as a kind and faithful Father; sees God in itself as the nearest, dearest friend, having the same desires and the same loves. "Blessed are the pure."

Now, when the heart is thus filled with God, when it is all truth and goodness and love and purity within, then it breathes upon all around it the spirit of peace and goodwill, and so wins the added benediction, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." A son is like his father; and he whose heart is pure shows that he is a child of the pure and holy God. A son has free access to his father, and shares his thoughts and feelings; and so the heart that delights only in what is true and right and good has the freest communion of thought and feeling with God. A son lives in his father's house,

under his love and care ; and the heart that is so filled with pure and loving thoughts of God finds God's love in every thing, and in this sweet thought lives with God as in his own heaven. The son is heir of all that his father owns ; and so this heart, made rich with the presence of God, feels itself the possessor of all the good and beautiful things that God has made. More than a servant, though it is an honor to serve such a King ; more than a friend, though "Friend " was the most tender, confiding name that Jesus gave to his disciples : the child of God, — and this in the meaning of the full-grown son, who has all the love and confidence, all the dignity and privilege, all the possession and power, that belong to the son.

This is the blessing of the "peacemakers." And who are they ? Not the men who merely wish peace for themselves, and for the sake of quiet keep out of the way when the poor are to be defended, the oppressed delivered, when any wrong is to be put down, any evil set aside, any good gained by pain and toil and trouble ; not such selfish, easy-natured lovers of peace as these ; not the compromisers, who, for the sake of peace, give up all right, all principle, all duty ; not mere go-betweens, who quite as often are mischief-makers : but souls that are first pure and undefiled within, and being all unselfish in their own thoughts and desires, free from envy, jealousy, covetousness, deceit, are peaceful toward all men, and seek to make peace between others by

doing, by helping, by securing, what is just and true and good. "Blessed are the peacemakers."

And yet the world that does not love God, the world that put to death the Son of peace, hates such peacemakers, and gives them no rest. The world would be let alone in its own ways, would have no opposition to its wickedness, no dispute over its opinions, and no strife against its injustice and wrongs: such a peace it would like well enough. But the men who insist that things shall be set right as the only means of peace, the men who would carry peace to the injured, the suffering, the oppressed, by securing justice in and from the world,—these peacemakers the world hates as darkness hates light, as evil hates good. And so, when Jesus had closed his round of benedictions, he reminded his disciples that these blessings were spiritual in their nature and effects,—blessings for the inner life,—and that the very causes that would secure inward peace would provoke opposition and persecution from without. When about to be borne from his disciples, and to suffer upon the cross, he said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. The servant is not greater than his lord: if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you."¹

The life of a simple, earnest Christian is a rebuke to the sins and follies of the world; and, besides, the Christian

¹ John xv. 18, 20.

seeks directly to reform the lives of others, and to bring everybody to his own standard. But such protest and rebuke, if they do not produce reform, provoke ridicule and hostility; and the history of Christianity shows how true was this warning of Jesus to his disciples, that in winning his blessing they would gain also the hatred of the world. But at the same time he taught them that this very hatred should be a token and a means of greater blessing. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." To be hated and injured because they do right, — this is a sign that they are children of God. The wider the world separates from them, the nearer they are to the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven." If by love for Christ, and zeal in his cause, we bring upon ourselves the hatred and persecution of the world, we thus make ourselves one with Jesus in what he taught and what he is; and he will make us one with himself in that kingdom of blessedness which is his own.

To take in the whole meaning of these benedictions, we must again remind ourselves how the people who first heard them were all talking about the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven, and looking to see this set up in their

day and in their own land. But the kingdom they were looking for was still an earthly kingdom, — a conquering Messiah heading victorious legions, striking terror by his name and his deeds, clothed, like Moses and Elijah, with the power of God. Their sacred books told them how God had drowned the Egyptians in the Red Sea, had smitten the Assyrians with blindness, had driven out the Philistines from the land. And now this Prophet with his wondrous powers might surely become their leader and king. The nation was ripe for throwing off the Roman yoke. But, instead of war and victory, Jesus talked of peace and persecution; instead of offices and honors, he talked of trials and sorrows; instead of pride, he talked of purity, of blessings within the soul, and of reward in heaven. He showed how far they were from the true spirit and life of that kingdom, and from the possession of its blessings and rewards; that even their religion had become a form, a burden, an abuse; that they had lost the meaning of the commandments, and by traditions had set up false and evil rules and practices about marriage and divorce, about oaths and anger and revenge; that the people which should have been “the salt of the earth,” to purify and save the heathen world, had so lost the purity and power of its own religion, that it had been cast out from among the nations, and was now “trodden under foot” by the pagan Romans; that the light of God’s word, which should shine like the city

that glittered before them on the hillside, was now dim and hidden, like "a candle under a bushel;" and that the true way of getting back the light and power they had lost, and of setting up the kingdom of heaven, was not by boasting, like the Pharisees, of being the children of Abraham, nor by rebelling against their Roman master, but by obeying the spirit of the law in their hearts and lives; not by making a show of fasting and praying and giving, but by having within them right feelings and aims, true love to God and love to men. This love would be the true life, the true religion, the true kingdom of heaven; and by acting toward all men with the spirit of kindness and good-will, and seeking to make everybody as good and as happy as is possible to men in this earthly life, they would be truly the children of God, and perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. The rule of unselfish love is the blessedness of heaven.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE LORD'S PRAYER AND THE GOLDEN RULE.

How to pray, and how to trust ; how to love, and how to give, — these are lessons that everybody needs to learn, and that make up almost the whole idea of religion and of life as taught by Jesus. These lessons, as he taught them, are so simple, that it seems as if anybody might have thought of them ; and they sound so easy, that it seems as if everybody might live up to them. Yet, to the people who heard him, these were new and strange lessons ; and, though now so familiar in word, how hard we find it to carry out the rules of Jesus in our lives ! In one sense, his words were not new, and need not have seemed strange. The same great truths of praying, trusting, loving, doing, lie open in nature and in the Bible. That God is in heaven, — the most high and glorious and blessed place that poetry can imagine ; that God is holy and just and good ; that God takes care of us, and of every living thing ; that God will help us in our troubles, will hear us when we pray, will save us by his mercy ; that God is to be worshipped as King and Lord

over all the earth, and yet that he can be spoken to as a father, — all this we read in the Old Testament, the Bible of the Jews ; and many of these thoughts and feelings we find in the sacred books of other nations, and in the writings of such wise and good men as Socrates, Plato, Cicero, Marcus Aurelius, and others who knew nothing of the teachings of Christ. That we should be just and kind and forgiving, and that it is better to do good than to do evil, was also taught by some of the pagan philosophers ; and Confucius, the great Chinese teacher, who lived more than five hundred years before Christ, came very near the idea of the Golden Rule. He put it into the negative form : “ What I do not wish men to do to me, I also wish not to do to men.”¹ The famous Jewish teacher Rabbi Hillel, who was president of a chief academy in Jerusalem at the time when Jesus was born, had also hit upon this negative form of the same precept : “ Do not unto another what thou wouldest not have another do unto thee. This is the whole law : the rest is mere commentary.” Hillel said also, “ Do not judge thy neighbor until thou hast stood in his place.”²

Speaking of dealings between man and man, Plato said, “ The principle of them is very simple : Thou shalt not touch that which is mine, if thou canst help, or remove the least thing which belongs to me without my consent ; and

¹ “ The Chinese Classics ; ” by James Legge, D.D., vol. i. p. 79.

² Deutsch on the Talmud, p. 31.

may I, being of sound mind, do to others as I would that they should do to me.”¹

That the wise and good of all lands should approach the same moral ideas, is what we ought to expect; for God is one, and truth is one, and nature is one, and the human heart is one in its wants and its fears, in its loves and its hopes; and all true and good things stand together, the same in their essence and in their end. But the true and good things found in the sacred books of the old pagan world, and in the sayings of pagan philosophers, are buried and lost in the many things that we now see to be weak and foolish and false: religion lost its simple character; prayer was made a form or a display, and alms-giving a show; and wise and good rules of life were contradicted by much that was wrong and evil. Now, in the lessons of Jesus, all is true, and all is good, with no mixture of weakness or of mistake; and the wisest, purest thoughts ever spoken, and the best rules ever given, are put together in a few simple words; made clear to everybody, made beautiful as the birds and the flowers, and sweet and blessed as the song of angels. So it does not matter at all, whether the things that he said had ever been said before, or not: in the *way* in which he said them, they were as new and fresh as if a voice had then, for the first time, spoken out of heaven. As we know from the story of his early life,

¹ The Laws, B. XI., Jowett's translation; Dialogues, vol. iv. p. 424.

and from the evidence of his sayings themselves, he had never learned any thing from the philosophers of other lands ; he was so far original in the matter of his teaching ; and, in the manner of it, “ he spake as never man spake ; ” he spoke as one whose soul was identified with truth, who was truth itself ; and he spoke truths full of life to the souls of all men, in all times. The people who heard him were astonished, for “ he taught them as one having authority ; ” and we feel in his words the voice of God.

The prayer which Jesus taught his disciples eighteen hundred years ago answers for us to-day, and for every man who has any sort of belief in God, whether he is a Jew, a Christian, a Mohammedan, or a Pagan. There is not one word in it that belongs to any one religious sect, or to any one race or country ; but it speaks the wants, the feelings, the wishes, the hopes, of all human souls alike ; and in these few simple words, that any child can learn, are given all the chief things that men need for their earthly and their spiritual good. In those days men of all religions made a show of praying in public places, and with long forms ; and they were accustomed to say over and over the same words, and to cry aloud, as if they thought, for this, God would be more likely to hear them ; and so prayer was made either a task to be gone over, or a form to be run through with, or a performance to please the doer, and make him appear pious to his neighbors. But Jesus taught us, that true

prayer is the soul speaking to God as a child speaks to his father ; that prayer is always best when it is simplest ; and that when we are alone, by fixing our minds and hearts upon God and his goodness, we can bring him near. For God is not in the church nor in the temple, not in any sacred place where we must go to find him, but is in heaven, which is everywhere above the earth ; so that, wherever we are, we can feel that he knows us, sees us, hears us, and can speak to him as our Father. Now, because God is our Father, we should love him and honor him, and should hallow his name ; and, if we love God, we shall wish and pray that his will may be done in our hearts and lives, and by everybody in the world ; that so his kingdom may come in earth as in heaven. All prayer begins in honoring God.

But the very feeling that causes us to honor and obey him enables us to trust him also. As the son of the greatest monarch knows that his father, though he has the affairs of his kingdom and even of the whole world to think of, yet will not forget him, but will provide for his food and clothing, his education and his pleasure, so we can be sure that our Father, who rules the world, thinks upon us as his children, and loves to make us happy. He would have us trust him, so as to have no care nor trouble about what shall come to us to-morrow, but leave all care in his hands. He feeds the birds, he clothes the lilies ; and we his children should not be worried about what we shall eat, or what we

shall wear, but should ask him every day, as our Father, to give us our daily bread; and, if we make this a real prayer, we shall go about our work for the day cheerfully and hopefully, believing that God will bless and prosper us. And, in thus trusting our earthly wants to God's blessing upon our industry, we can give our hearts to the higher welfare of our spiritual and immortal natures, — can “seek first the kingdom of God,” and “lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven.”

Having this in view, we should pray most earnestly for spiritual good, to be freed from sin, and to be kept from temptation and evil. But just here Jesus teaches us that, to pray rightly, we must also feel and act aright. If we pray to God to forgive our sins, we must be ready to forgive those who wrong and injure us. If we really wish to become like our Father in heaven, and, by doing his will, to make heaven in our hearts, then we should pray and seek to be kept from the power of evil, and from all temptations that might lead us to evil thoughts, to evil feelings, or to evil acts. And for such help as this, the help of God's own Spirit, giving strength to our spirits, we can pray with the highest confidence. For God wishes us to be pure, and true, and wholly good; and if earthly parents wish to see their children well and safe and happy, and will do all in their power to secure to them such good gifts, how much more shall our Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him!

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THE WIDOW WHO GAVE ALL THAT SHE HAD.

But to pray rightly we must live rightly ; and the same feelings of love and trust toward our heavenly Father that lead us truly to pray will lead us to act toward our fellow-men with feelings of good-will. So Jesus, at the same time that he taught us how to pray and how to trust, taught us how to live and how to give. *Give* with a free heart, but with a quiet hand ; give privately, when this is possible ; and never give for show, or to get glory from man, even when for the sake of example, or to help a public object, you give openly. Never boast of your charity : do not let even the left hand know what the right hand doeth. To be sure, money given to the poor would do them as much good, as mere money, if, like the Pharisees, we should have a trumpet sounded before the church-door, or at the street-corner, to gather beggars to receive our alms. But what money buys is not all the good that comes of giving : every act of kindness to another should bless our own hearts with the warmth of love ; and this it will do, if we give, not from pride nor for praise, but from real love and sympathy ; and, besides, when we give with real kindness, our looks and words, the very tones of our voices, will do good, as well as the gifts we bestow. Indeed, the act we do may help only some bodily want of the poor, but the manner of doing this may cheer and bless the heart ; and thus we may soften and refine the feelings of others, and make their lives smooth and cheerful.

To know how to give, we must learn how to love ; for, by kind words and feelings, we can give to others a share of whatever good thing we carry in our own hearts. But how to love ? At first that seems so easy ! for children grow up to love their parents and one another, and love seems to be a feeling of nature that comes of itself. But Jesus says, “ If ye love them which love you, what thank have ye ? and, if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye ? ” If we would know the full blessing of love, if we would be like our Father in heaven by loving as God loves, we must go far beyond that natural feeling which prompts us to love those who love us ; we must love our enemies, and be ready to forgive them, and to do them good ; if we do not forgive others, we cannot pray to be forgiven ; we must be kind to the evil and the unthankful ; and though we dislike their characters, reprove their faults, and shun their ways, we must wish them good and not evil, and try to do good to them as often as we have the opportunity ; we must even bless them who curse us, and pray for those who seek to do us wrong ; we must be gentle and patient under injuries, and never allow the feeling of hatred or of revenge ; we must remember that our Father in heaven maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust ; and by this kind, even, and universal love we must strive to become perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect. All this makes

love far from the easy thing it appeared at first ; but at the same time it makes it the most lovely thing we can imagine. And Jesus has given a very easy rule for learning and practising this perfect, this heavenly love : AS YE WOULD THAT MEN SHOULD DO TO YOU, DO YE ALSO TO THEM LIKEWISE.

“Tit for tat” is the rule that human nature loves to practise. Children begin with this in their little quarrels ; grown-up men, and even nations, carry it out in their disputes ; and the Jews went so far as to make this a rule of their religion, — “An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.”

“Served him right,” we are apt to say, when a quarrelsome boy or man “gets as good as he gave.” But Jesus taught us not to do to others as they do to us, but as we would like to have them do to us. If they are in poverty, trouble, sorrow, we should put ourselves in their place, and feel and act toward them as we should wish them to feel and act toward us. If others injure us by word or deed, instead of flying into a passion, and retorting in the same way, we should set an example of patience, of mildness, of dignity, of magnanimity. “Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also ; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.” And, even when others are wholly in the wrong, we should be more disposed to pity than to blame, and should take into account their circumstances, their tempta-

tions, their necessities, their weaknesses. "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven."

By this broad rule of love, Jesus did not intend to abolish law, to do away with penalty, to give free range to the wicked to do as they please, without reproof or punishment. That would be to set vice above virtue, and to put it in the power of sin and evil to rule the world without resistance. No one ever condemned sin more strongly than did Jesus; no one ever pronounced more terrible rebukes, nor threatened more terrible woes to evil-doers. The very purity of love for what is true and good made him a burning fire toward all falsehood and evil. More than once we are told that he looked upon the Pharisees with anger; and how solemnly he warned them of "the damnation of hell."¹ But, in such warnings and rebukes, Jesus showed his love of truth, of purity, of goodness, and the yearning of his heart to turn men away from sin, that they might be saved. Never, never did he show anger at any wrong done to himself; never, never did he threaten his persecutors; with his dying breath, upon the cross, he prayed for his murderers, "Father, forgive them: they know not what they do." And if we are filled with the love of Jesus, if we make his "Sermon on the Mount" the rule of our lives, though we shall hate all wrong and sin, and shall feel that wrong-doers

¹ Matt. xxiii. 33.

should be punished, and that love itself must be just, yet we shall pity the transgressor, and show kindness to the evil-doer. Though love must and will honor the law that God himself has given for the praise of the good, and for the punishment of the evil, yet as the law of our own lives, to govern all our thoughts and feelings and actions toward others, we should bind upon our hearts —

THE GOLDEN RULE.

CHAPTER XXV.

VISITS TO JERUSALEM. — A KEY TO HIS FATE.

THE quiet home life of Jesus at Capernaum was varied by visits to Jerusalem, where he came in contact with excited crowds, and often found or made more enemies than friends. Jerusalem was then the hotbed of religious fanaticism and of political disturbance. The Jews had put up with the oppression of Herod the Great, because, with all his crimes and extortions, he had humored them in their religion, and had rebuilt their temple. They contrived to have Archelaus banished by the Roman emperor, since, with the wickedness of his father Herod, he had not his wit for managing the people. But though they thus got rid of a tyrant, and of a hated family of kings, the Jews only brought themselves more completely under the power of the Romans. Herod the Great had been set up as a king by a Roman army, and had kept himself in power by means of costly presents to the Roman emperor, and by building cities and temples in his honor; but as he called himself a Jew (though he was descended from an old Pagan family

of Edom), and kept up the Jewish worship on a splendid scale, the people did not then feel that they were under the direct yoke of the Roman empire. Now, however, by asking the Romans to deliver them from the son of Herod, they had put themselves completely into the hands of this foreign Pagan power; and, like the frogs in the fable, they had got "King Stork" to come among them to devour them. Though they had known cruelties and oppressions before, these had been offset by certain privileges; and, under all the foreign rulers whose rod they had felt in the course of five hundred years, they had still kept up the spirit of national life, and some forms and signs of their old independence. But now Roman soldiers were quartered upon every town, and tax-gatherers of the Roman government swarmed over the land; every Jew had to have his name registered at a Roman tax-office, and to give an account of his property: so that the people felt in the keenest way that they were under their heathen masters. We read continually, in the Gospels, of the "centurion" and the "publican," the representatives of Roman might and of Roman greed.

The Roman governor took away from the sanhedrim its old right of punishing religious offences by death; and the high priest could not hold office nor officiate in public without his consent. As a rule, the Romans treated the Jews with severity and contempt. They ridiculed their religion, and sometimes set up images, and had Pagan festivals, in

places which the Jews held sacred. What Tacitus, the Roman historian, has written of the rites and ceremonies of the Jews, charging them with silly customs and immoral habits, shows how they were generally looked upon by the Romans.¹ But poor, weak, crushed, hated, as they were, the Jews kept true to the forms of their religion. In old times it was their national sin to copy the ways of their heathen neighbors; and for this they were often punished by being brought under the power of a Pagan government. But since their return from captivity in Babylon they had never fallen into idolatry; and though their religion had lost much of its simplicity and purity, and was burdened with forms, rules, and customs not found in the early times, they felt, nevertheless, that they were more strict and true in the faith than their fathers had been; and, the more they were humbled in their political condition, the more they rose in spiritual pride as the one only people of the one only God. They felt it was a sin for such a people to serve another people, and these the worshippers of false gods. They read in their prophets the promises of the "kingdom of Israel," "the kingdom of God," ruling in power and glory over all nations, having "dominion from sea to sea, and as long as the sun and the moon should endure." The signs foretold by Daniel seemed to be taking place before their eyes. It must be that the Messiah was soon to come; and he would

¹ Tacitus, History, book v. chap. 5.

set them free, and put all enemies under their feet. Whoever would preach up their law, preach up their pride, preach up the kingdom of God, and at the same time promise them victory, independence, and power as a nation, would get their ears, would draw them after him, would raise them to such a fever that they were ready to receive him as the Christ, and to crown him as a king. Thus, shortly after the birth of Jesus, a native of Galilee by the name of Judas raised a large body of armed men to resist the census which the Roman emperor had ordered. He promised his followers to restore the "kingdom of God," as this was established by Moses, and urged them, as the people of God, to refuse to submit to any human power. One of his sons gave himself out as the Messiah. Again, some years after the death of Jesus, a famous Theudas pretended to be sent to deliver the people, and led thousands to follow him to the Jordan by promising that he would make the river divide before him, as had been done by Joshua and again by Elijah.¹ Indeed, in those days, fanatics and impostors were continually setting themselves up for the Messiah, and promising to drive out the Romans; and the people, though often deceived, were always on the lookout for their deliverer. Now, by his miracles, Jesus at times raised the feeling that he would be this expected deliverer of the nation; so that they were

¹ Josephus.

ready even "by force to make him king."¹ But, though he did preach up the law, he charged them with breaking it, and needing repentance, and reformation of life. Though he preached the kingdom of God, he made this so pure and spiritual and holy that none could enter it without being born again. And hence many hated him with all the intensity of that pride and patriotism that led them to look for a political king and saviour. Their very longing for such a Messiah re-acted against him as the preacher of meekness, of holiness, and of love. The fierce opposition of religious and political parties was roused against him when he went to Jerusalem. Religious teachers hated Jesus because they saw that his words stirred the hearts of the people, and drew multitudes after him, and that every word told against the scribes and Pharisees, and tended to break their power. Much as different teachers and different schools may have quarrelled among themselves, they all agreed in opposing this new teacher, who accused them of changing the laws of Moses, and "making the word of God of no effect."² Political leaders hated Jesus because, when he was popular enough to have made himself king, he did nothing to open the way to their ambition, but even denounced them as false guides and oppressors. Now, every leader had his party, and could stir up a tumult against Jesus by charging him with being an enemy of the nation ;

¹ John vi. 15.² Mark. vii. 13.

and the very people who at first followed him, in the hope that he was the Messiah, would turn against him when they found that he did nothing for their party or their cause, but gave them reproofs and warnings instead of promises and rewards.

This state of things shows why it was, that, whenever he went to Jerusalem, Jesus was in some way attacked by the priests and Pharisees or by the people, until at last the sanhedrim ventured to seize him, and then stirred up a mob to cry that he must be crucified. At the pool of Bethesda, he healed a poor man who for thirty-eight years had not been able to walk. The news of this miracle drew crowds together to seek after Jesus; and yet we are told that "they sought to slay him."¹ The reason given is, that "he had done these things on the sabbath day." Now, God surely had never given a rule for keeping the sabbath that would make it unlawful upon that day to heal a sick man, or to pull a drowning man or beast out of the water. But the "Doctors of the Law" had made a great many hard and foolish rules about the sabbath; and it was by enforcing such rules as a necessary part of religion, that they kept their control over the ignorant and superstitious people. So when Jesus broke through their rules, and drew to himself the wonder and praise of the people, the "doctors" took alarm. They saw that his teaching and example, attended

¹ John vi. 16.

with such wonders, would soon break down their power; and seeing that they could not hinder his works, nor silence his voice, they determined to put him out of the way.

This hatred of Jesus by the leaders of schools and parties in Jerusalem was still more marked when they heard that the people were already talking about him as the Christ, and were saying, "When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?"¹ The Pharisees and chief priests now sent officers to take him; but the honest soldiers heard him preaching to the people, and were so much struck with what he said, that they did not dare to touch him. Afterwards, going openly into the temple, he there uttered the most wonderful and lovely sayings about "the light of the world," the "freedom of the truth," the "love of his Father," the victory over death; but, at the same time, reproved the people for their sins and their unbelief, and for this they began to abuse him. They called him a Samaritan, as a name of contempt; they said, "Thou hast a devil," and so mocked at all he said and did as the effect of magic or of a wicked demon. At last the mob spirit was fairly roused; and "they took up stones to cast at him,"² so that Jesus was obliged to escape for his life. This was at the feast of tabernacles in the fall, when Jerusalem was crowded with strangers.

The same thing happened to him again the following

¹ John vii. 31.

² John viii. 59.



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winter, at the feast of the dedication of the temple. Now, as before, Jesus showed his character by works of love, and by words of love. These excited the wonder and raised the hopes of the people; but, at the same time, they roused the jealousy of the Pharisees. He gave sight to a man who had been blind from his birth. No such wonder had been done in Jerusalem, and the whole city was full of it. But, the more the people ran after Jesus, the more their rulers feared him and hated him. The Pharisees brought up the old charge: he had broken the sabbath day; and therefore he must be “a sinner,” and, so far from being the Son of God, must have an evil spirit, a “devil,” within him. Jesus answered them by his beautiful parable of the good shepherd, who was ready to give his life for the sheep.¹ But the people only quarrelled over his words, first among themselves and then with him. At last they charged him with blasphemy, in “making himself God;” and they took up stones again to stone him. For a while he kept them in check by defending from their own Bible his right to call himself the Son of God; but “they thought again to take him;” and, seeing that his life could not be safe in Jerusalem, he made his escape, and went away to a retired place beyond the River Jordan.² Here we must anticipate in a few words what belongs to later chapters; since it is only by understanding the religious jealousies and the political

¹ John x. 1-18.

² John x. 22-40.

plottings of Jerusalem that we get the key to the fate of Jesus.

While he was on the other side of Jordan, Martha and Mary sent him word that their brother Lazarus, whom he so deeply loved, was sick; and Jesus came back as far as Bethany, to perform the greatest of his miracles, in raising Lazarus from the dead. The news of this ran like wildfire, and brought crowds from Jerusalem out to Bethany to see for themselves the unheard-of wonder of a dead man who had risen from the grave, and was again alive. Indeed, messengers had hurried to the city, only two hours distant, to warn the Pharisees that the new prophet had come back again, and that everybody was ready to believe on him. The great sanhedrim was now called together; and the chief priests and Pharisees, who had so often tried to get Jesus put out of the way by a mob or by an assassin, took advantage of the fickleness of the people; and by spreading a rumor, that, if Jesus was allowed to go on, the Romans would come to destroy the nation, they got the ignorant multitude upon their side, and made it so unsafe for Jesus to appear in public, that he once more retreated into the wilderness on the eastern side of Jordan, and did not again show himself in Jerusalem until he came to meet his death. No wonder that from the depth of his soul he cried, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee! how often would I

have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ! ”¹ Probably in no other city of Palestine would he have met such a fate ; but, in the ferment of Jerusalem in those days, it could not be otherwise than that such teachings and warnings should provoke the cry, “ Let him be crucified ! ” One has only to recall scenes in Paris during the Revolution of 1790 and the Commune of 1871, to realize that such violence was an outbreak of human nature, and not a special crime of the Jews. That they felt themselves to be sincere, they showed when Pilate wished them to let him go, by crying out, “ His blood be upon us and on our children.”²

¹ Matt. xxiii. 37.

² Matt. xxvii. 25.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE PARABLES OF JESUS.

EVERY child has read *Æsop's Fables*, and has learned from them some wise and good lessons which he will remember as long as he lives. At first he was taken with the idea of beasts, birds, fishes, insects, trees, talking to one another, and having the same ideas and feelings, the same wishes, hopes, pleasures, fears, that he found in himself. In growing older he has learned that animals and plants do not talk, nor show the same signs of moral feeling with men; but he still remembers the moral of the fable, and remembers it all the better from having first learned it in that way. Indeed, he sometimes finds that the fable has a deeper meaning than he used to see in it when a child, and contains more wisdom than a book of philosophy. In the same way, a proverb will be remembered and quoted long after a sermon is forgotten.

For this reason Jesus made much use of parables and proverbs in teaching his doctrines of the kingdom of heaven and the way of life. The truths he taught were broad and

deep as any thing in the old philosophies; and sometimes, as in the Sermon on the Mount, and in discourses reported by John, he spoke as a philosopher; and, though his words were clear, their meaning was so full and vast that no mind has yet been able to exhaust the contents of some of his sayings.¹ But he loved rather to speak in parables. By so doing he fixed the attention of his hearers, and helped them to remember what he said; he set them to thinking and studying; for his parables were often like a seed which was sown in their minds, and in part hidden, until it should grow and show a much larger meaning than at first; and, besides, he taught them in this way to look upon what was

¹ The marked difference in style between the discourses of Jesus, reported by John, and those given by the other evangelists, has led some to doubt whether the fourth Gospel was really written by the apostle whose name it bears, and to ascribe it to some Christian philosopher of a later day, who put into the mouth of Jesus himself the doctrines that had grown up around his life and teaching. But the Jesus whom John describes does not differ from the Jesus in the other Gospels more widely than Socrates, as he appears in Plato's Dialogues, differs from Socrates in Xenophon's narrative; and in the Sermon on the Mount and in some of the parables there are sayings as deep and full as any thing given by John. We know, too, that Jesus often talked to his disciples apart from the people, and then went deeper into the mysteries of his life and doctrines. No one evangelist professes to give all that Jesus said and did. Each would naturally give prominence to what most impressed his own mind, and would report this in his own way. Now, the style of John in his epistles shows that his mind and heart would have seized upon just such sayings of Jesus as his Gospel contains.

passing around them in nature and in the world as always teaching some moral lesson, some higher truth of the kingdom of God. Thus he linked together his own age with future times, through truths that grow more and more from one generation to another; and he linked the natural world to the spiritual by analogies full of beauty and of life.

Of all the parables that Jesus spoke, only thirty are preserved in the Gospels. Many of these have not more than two or three lines; and, in some cases, two or three words contain the whole lesson of the parable. Yet even two or three words, like "the pearl of great price," the "leaven in the meal," the "treasure in the field," the "grain of mustard-seed,"¹ give a lesson that we can apply to so many things, and in so many ways, that we can repeat it every day, as long as we live, without using up its wisdom, or tiring of its simple beauty.

Most of the parables of Jesus refer to the "kingdom of heaven;" for this was the great subject of which he talked, and about which the minds of his hearers were busy. The first of the parables, as recorded by Matthew, — the parable of the sower, — was a picture of the way in which his own preaching and the preaching of his apostles was likely to be received; the way, in fact, in which the gospel is received by different classes to this day. As we have seen in the sketch of his life at Capernaum, his Sermon on

¹ Matt. xiii.

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JESUS PREACHING FROM A BOAT.

SCULPTOR DURAND.

the Mount, and his teachings and miracles in the town, had made such a stir, that he could not go out without a crowd gathering around him, who were ready enough to be his disciples, if they could be sure that he was the Messiah, and would set up the kingdom of heaven. Jesus felt that the time had come to sift such hearers by testing their real interest in him and his doctrine; so one morning, when even a greater crowd than usual pressed around him as he was standing on the shore of the Lake of Galilee, he stepped into a boat, and pushed out a little way from the land. Looking over the eager multitude, his eye would rest upon the rich plain of Gennesareth, and the rounded hills in the background, from which the towns along the shore drew their supplies of fruit and grain; and perhaps, at that very moment, he could see in the distance a sower scattering the seed for a new crop. No fences divided the fields, nor even separated the grain from the beaten paths, over which foot-passengers and beasts of burden made their way to and from the lake. The sower could not stop to plant each separate grain of wheat securely in a furrow prepared for it,—to pluck up the thorns, to throw away the stones, to break up the fallow ground: he must scatter the seed broadcast over the ploughed field, let it fall where it would; and some would fall by the wayside, and be eaten up by the birds; some would drop into stony places, to sprout and wither; some would be choked by thorns; and some would

fall into good ground, and yield a good crop.¹ So is it everywhere: in the world of nature and of grace, —

“ God scatters love on every side
 Freely among his children all;
And always hearts are lying open wide,
 Wherein some grains may fall.”

But though truth and love, like the sunshine and the rain, are dropping from the skies for all alike, our hearts may catch no good if they are hard and selfish; or the best gifts of God may be choked within us by our worldly wishes and unholy feelings. It is not enough that the good seed is sown, or that a good share of it falls to us.

God, whose hand of love is everywhere, is not the only sower. The enemy, the Evil One, is always busy sowing tares in our hearts and in the world; trying to mix evil with good, and to make every good beginning turn out badly. The sower of the good seed cannot give his time to watching tares: he warns us to be watchful, to keep out the evil, and to cherish the good.² At the same time, we must take care not to spoil the good by trying to make it grow too fast, or yield too much; if we pull up the plant every day, to see how the roots grow, we shall soon bring it to an end. When the good seed is planted in us, we must let it grow quietly and naturally; and, though at first it

¹ Matt. xiii. 1-9.

² Matt. xiii. 24-30.

seems no bigger than a grain of mustard-seed, it will by and by branch out with beautiful flowering twigs, the home of singing birds.¹

To make life a success, to give a real dignity and worth to our living in the world, we must set truth before every thing in our hearts, and must obey truth above every thing in our actions. We often hear it asked, "What is such a man worth?" and the answer is, "He is worth so many millions." Yet, with all his millions, the man himself may be worth little or nothing to the world. Like the rich fool, just when he thinks he has all he needs, and "has much goods laid up for many years," his soul may be summoned empty and naked before God, with not one good thing to show for all it has had.² What has he added to the real value of life, either by his ideas, his principles, his feelings, or his actions? This must show how much he is really worth, whether he is truly "rich towards God;" and every man may make himself worth just as much as there is in him of capacity for good. To gain that value, we must be willing to part with every other. As the wise man had said, "Buy the truth, and sell it not,"³ so Jesus taught us to give up every thing else, — riches, honors, pleasures, — to get the hidden treasure of wisdom, the priceless pearl of truth.⁴ And, rightly to possess the truth, it is not enough that we

¹ Mark iv. 26-34.

² Luke vii. 16-21.

³ Prov. xxiii. 23.

⁴ Matt. xiii. 44-46.

accept it with the understanding, nor even that we acknowledge it with the heart: we must incorporate it with our very self, so that it shall move all our springs of thought, of feeling, and of action, and, like the leaven in the meal, shall work itself into every atom of our being.¹ We cannot mix truth and error, good and evil, any more than we can "put new cloth in an old garment," or "new wine in old bottles."² "*I am the truth,*" said Jesus; for truth was his very life; and that life, through which the truth of God continually shone, was the light of the world.

The first series of parables taught, in many forms, how "the kingdom of heaven" should be received into the heart, and there be nourished as a growth and a life. But what if one had neglected this heavenly wisdom, had failed to profit by the voice of truth planted in his conscience, had suffered his heart to be filled with the spirit of this world, and his life to be wasted upon low and selfish aims? Then other parables show how God's love is greater than our folly, his grace greater than our sin. Like the woman who sweeps the house, and searches it, to find a lost piece of silver; like the shepherd who leaves his whole flock, and goes up and down the wilderness seeking the one lost sheep, — so God turns aside from the blessed society of angels, to seek the lost children of men. And though the prodigal had abused his father's love, and turned his back

¹ Matt. xiii. 33.

² Luke v. 36-39.

upon his father's house, and had sunk himself to the lowest company ; yet in his want and wretchedness, when all have forsaken him, and his very vices in which he rioted have turned him out of doors among the swine, his father longs for him, pities him, welcomes his return, strips off his rags, kisses away his tears, presses him to his heart.¹

If we feel ourselves weak to break away from evil, if our hearts are heavy with doubts and fears, then Jesus has set before us the blessedness of prayer as a help for every need ; if, with the publican, our simple, heartfelt cry is, " God be merciful to me a sinner,"² the answer of mercy is ready beforehand ; if like the widow, alone and helpless, we beg to be delivered from trials, griefs, and enemies, the righteous Judge will hear and help ;³ if, like the traveller at midnight, we come hungry and weary, we shall have bread and shelter.⁴ Greater far than all human patience, sympathy, compassion, is the love of our heavenly Father. " If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone ? Or, if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent ? Or, if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion ? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him ! " ⁵ Even though we should seem to be utterly for-

¹ Luke xv. 1-32.

² Luke xviii. 13.

³ Luke xviii. 2-8.

⁴ Luke xi. 5-8.

⁵ Luke xi. 11-13.

gotten and forsaken, and like Lazarus should lie at the rich man's gate, and be licked by the dogs; yet, if through all we cling to God as our portion, we shall find at last his angels ready to carry us to Abraham's bosom.¹ Great as may be our patience under the seeming delays of Providence, God's patience is greater far under the delays and provocations of our sins. The son who proudly said, "I will not," yet afterwards repented and went; the laborers who, after standing all day idle, came at last at the eleventh hour, — received commendation and reward unmixed with any word of reproof. So freely, so largely, does God give of that grace which is altogether his own.²

Yet mingled with these parables of love and tenderness were others of warning against despising mercies and abusing grace. Not what we receive, but what we do and are, determines our character: that "which goeth out of a man defileth him."³ The kingdom of God is set before us as a rich and abundant feast; all things are ready, and the invitation is free and urgent. But if we slight the generosity of the host, and make weak and frivolous excuses for staying away, we shall find at last the opportunity lost; and those whom we may have thought beneath us in point of privilege — the very heathen — coming from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, to sit down in the kingdom of God.⁴ Yes, if those who are

¹ Luke xvi. 22.

² Matt. xx. 1-16.

³ Matt. xv. 10-20.

⁴ Luke xiii. 28, 29, xiv. 16-24.

invited to the marriage of the king's son treat the messengers with contempt and violence, they may even be punished as rebels.¹ Such blessings as Jesus brings in the gospel cannot be treated lightly. The fact of having them makes us responsible for using them. It is true of all privileges and advantages, — our birth, our natural talents, our education, our property, our position, — that "to whom much is given, of him much shall be required."² So is it with the spiritual blessing of the gospel. The householder who has planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower; in one word, who has done every thing to bring forward the vines, and protect them from injury, — has a right to look for a good crop of fruit, and may justly be angry with the husbandmen if, after all, they seize the vineyard as their own, and use the fruit for themselves, or foolishly waste it. He would even do right to cut them off from privileges they had so badly abused, and to give the vineyard to others.³ The fig-tree, which for years has been tended with care, may at last be cut down, if it yields no fruit.⁴

The good we so freely receive, we must as freely share. The favor that God shows to us, we must show to our fellows. If in the greatness of his compassion the Lord has forgiven us ten thousand talents, we must not be hard upon

¹ Matt. xxii. 1-14.

² Luke xii. 48.

³ Matt. xxi. 33-46.

⁴ Luke xiii. 6-9.

a fellow-creature for a debt of a hundred pence, but from our hearts must forgive every one his brother's trespasses,¹ must forgive him over and over again, even "until seventy times seven."²

The things of this life, committed to our trust, we must so use in deeds of good-will to others, that even the "mammon of unrighteousness," that is commonly the foe of piety, shall be turned into a friend to plead for us by the good use to which we have put it;³ and yet, when we have done all, we must remember that we are only stewards, and be ready to say, "We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."⁴ God's mercy to us should move us to gratitude to him, and to pity for others; the sense of our sinfulness and ill-desert will move us to pour forth our gratitude, like precious ointment, at the feet of Jesus. He who has had much forgiven will love much.⁵ And the sense of our own need and nothingness will prompt us to pity and relieve all who are in any trouble or distress, without regard to outward differences or conditions. Like the Good Samaritan, we shall look upon every man as a neighbor, and pity and help every sufferer as a brother.⁶ The blessings conferred upon us, the gifts intrusted to us, summon us to watchful fidelity in view of our final account. The "pounds," the "talent," put into

¹ Matt. xviii. 21-35.

² Matt. xviii. 21-35.

³ Luke xvi. 1-13.

⁴ Luke xvii. 7-10.

⁵ Luke vii. 40-50.

⁶ Luke x. 24-37.

our hands, are not simply to be kept from rust and waste: they are to be improved in the service of the Master, and kept in readiness for his coming. His rebuke for neglect and abuse will be as sharp and severe as his reward of faithfulness will be rich and free. We have only to be true to our trust, and we shall enter in to the joy of our Lord.¹ But we must “occupy till he come;”² and like the wise virgins, with our lamps fed and trimmed, must watch and hope, always in readiness; “for we know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh.”³

The circle of parables, that began with sowing the good seed of the kingdom, with the promise of a hundred-fold fruitfulness to every good and willing heart, closed with the rewards and honors of the faithful use of the gospel, to be realized by the “blessed of the Father” in the glory of the heavenly state. Yet death, that must determine the final coming of the kingdom, shall also discriminate as to its true heirs and possessors. “For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to the shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just.”⁴ Well might Jesus say to us, as he said to the first hearers of these parables, “Have ye understood all these things?”⁵

¹ Matt. xxv. 14-30.

² Luke xix. 12-27.

³ Matt. xxv. 1-14.

⁴ Matt. xiii. 47-49.

⁵ Matt. xiii. 51.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS.

As with the parables of Jesus, so with his miracles, — a small part only of these wonderful works was put on record by the evangelists. Again and again they tell us that he did many mighty works, and “healed all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people;”¹ and, in the warmth of his admiration of the life of his Lord, John says, “There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.”² Yet it is not the number of miracles that Jesus did, but their reality as facts, their nature, their meaning, their object, that give character to his life and works. One real miracle, such as his own resurrection, would be enough to confirm him as the Son of God. The question is one of fact.

The laws of nature are so fixed and uniform that it is hard for us to believe in the reality of any event that seems

¹ Matt. iv. 23.

² John xxi. 25.

counter to the regular course of things as we have known it. Experience leads us to doubt whether such an event is even possible ; and reason demands that the report of it should be investigated with unusual care. But to say that an event counter to what we have hitherto observed to be the course of nature is impossible, and therefore not worth investigating, is unfair to our own reason, and to the character of trustworthy witnesses, and is itself counter to the spirit of true science. We do not know enough of nature, much less of the universe of which physical nature is only a lower platform, to affirm that nothing *can* ever take place, nor has ever taken place, contrary to, or even aside from, what we have observed to be the course of things in the material world. We do not know the whole of nature, — as, for instance, what lies between us and the fixed stars, or what is beyond those stars in infinite space ; what forms, what forces, are there ; or what is the constitution and condition of the interior of the earth on which we live. Science has often changed, and is still changing, its views upon such points, which have been for ages the study of man. What we call “*laws* of nature” are not original powers, not first and independent causes, but only the regular course and method by which certain events are observed to come to pass. One set of causes or conditions has always been observed to produce the same event, or, at least, to be followed by the same event ; and this we name the law

of nature in that case : as, that fire will burn wood or flesh ; that a stick or a stone thrown into the air will not fly like a bird, but will fall to the ground. But what we call the law in this case may not be the real power that brings the event to pass. This may lie far back of any thing that we can see or trace ; and the cause that stands next before the event may be only the last in a long chain of causes or conditions preceding the event, each of which stands connected with the result, and goes to make up the law. Every one of these causes may be in turn a sequence, a fact that follows some other fact ; and the so-called law may be nothing more than a string of sequences whose starting-point we do not know. What we trace in nature are these rows of secondary causes ; but there always remains something behind, that we do not get hold of. From time to time, science brings to light secondary causes that we had not before observed, or gives new forms, new names, new functions, to causes already known ; so that we are still learning nature, and are sometimes obliged to give up old notions of laws and causes, for some new principle or mode of action. Geology, magnetism, light, heat, sound, the diseases of the human body, give many examples of the changes which science has produced in our mode of conceiving of nature and its laws. No doubt other changes are yet to come ; for science — as, for instance, in the deep-sea dredgings — is always searching after something new ; and, behind every new fact that it

discovers, starts up again the question, "Why or how is this? or what and where is the starting-point of all?" And to that question we find no answer in Nature or her laws. How much has our knowledge of the universe expanded since the invention of the telescope! how much it has increased, and is increasing, since the use of spectrum analysis! And what vast discoveries may yet lie beyond! He, then, who says that this or that is impossible, because it seems contrary to what we already know of nature, may show only his own ignorance or conceit. True, the event that he would so cavalierly thrust aside may be "wondrous strange." And therefore, as a stranger, give it welcome.

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

Nature has a circumference too vast for our vision; and therefore what we call a miracle, or supernatural, may be only some higher plane of Nature, that for a moment crosses our plane of vision, — as, century by century, Venus makes the transit of our sun, or as a comet, roaming here and there in space by its own laws, once in ages flames across our sky. Like the comet, like the transit, the miracle, though so seldom as to be "wondrous strange," may be but a natural contact of the heavenly sphere with the earthly.

Or who can pretend to know enough of Nature to say that all her visible laws and effects do not lie in the grasp

of a spiritual power, which, without violence to the constitution of things, may put forth some extra movement for an extraordinary end? He who should deny this to be possible would only show that his mental horizon is too narrow to admit a conception of the universe so vast and sublime. Such a philosopher is the real *fetich* worshipper, who makes that material thing, called Nature, his only God. That which he can see and touch, can weigh and analyze, is the cause of all, — even of himself.

How much higher is the conception of a Power lying back of all things, the Cause of causes! how much more honorable to the human spirit to suppose a spirit over Nature, with which man has affinity!

The last carriage in a railway-train is drawn by the chain that links it to the carriage before it. But that chain is not the motive power; this lies in the locomotive far in advance; yet it is not in the nature of the locomotive, but in the steam that causes the engine to move; and the steam is provided by the engineer, whose intelligence so uses the nature of fire and of water; and though the locomotive moves on a fixed track, within the iron rails that mark its course, the engineer, by touching a valve, can increase or retard its speed, can guide it by his will. Thus, though Nature moves in the grooves provided in its own laws, the invisible hand may know how to touch its springs without violence, and even to halt it for a moment without

regard to stations or the time-table. What if at this point the king is to come on board? The strange halt arrests the attention of everybody; all heads are out at the windows; and, as the puffing of the engine and the rattling of the train have ceased, one hears the music that announces *who* has come, and why the halt was made. So the hum of Nature may have been for a moment stilled, the train of her events arrested without violence, that men might see and hear, might feel and know, the coming of the Prince of peace, announced with hosannas.

In such a case, the end would justify the means. If the object of a miracle were something trivial, unworthy, vain, mean, immoral, we might refuse even to look into the case. But when the alleged wonder stands connected with a life and character sublimely good, and with a purpose to bless, reform, and save mankind, then is the motive great enough to justify it; the occasion is worthy of such an attestation; and the wonder, instead of being the central figure, the show to attract the gaze of men, is simply the herald, the trumpeter, to announce that the king has come. So in the person of Jesus, whose life, teaching, motive, character, purpose, and results all combine to set him and his actions so far above the common level of our humanity that Renan at last says, "This sublime person must even in a sense be called divine,"—in the person and life of Jesus, the presumption against miracles is counterbalanced by the

circumstances of the case; and his wondrous works are open to evidence like any other facts. To say that a miracle is impossible, is to beg the question; for the very point is one of fact, whether such things were really done by him. To say that a miracle is contrary to experience, is again to beg the question; for our experience does not cover the whole history of mankind; and here in the Gospels are witnesses who testify that these events took place before their eyes. Now, these witnesses show by the simple, straightforward style of their story, that they were honest and sincere, men of plain common-sense, who themselves were slow to believe the greatest of the miracles, — the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. They tell the story of their own cowardice and wavering and unbelief with an honesty that commands our confidence. They do not use the miracles for effect: the greater part of them they do not even record. They had nothing to gain — no money, no fame, no power — by proclaiming these wonders: on the contrary, they put their own lives in danger by declaring such facts. They were made better men, and they sought to make others better by faith in Jesus. A great lawyer has said he “would like to cross-question these witnesses;” but he forgets that they endured the questioning of the cross, and gave their lives to prove that Jesus had done these things, and that they had seen him alive after his crucifixion.

From the reality of these works of Jesus as facts, we come back to their meaning and value. The proof of a power in Jesus, that does not belong to men, was as strong in his raising Lazarus from the dead, as if he had stood in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and called forth the dead from all the tombs that line its sides. The fact of his own resurrection will be discussed in a later chapter; our purpose here is to group the miracles, as we have already grouped the parables, into a single lesson. To get a true idea of these works of Jesus, we must bring them together, and arrange them in classes, and see when and how they were done, and with what motive and end.

One class of his miracles relates to nature, — the physical world, together with animal and vegetable life. By his word he stilled the tempest on the Sea of Galilee, just as the courageous and experienced fishermen who manned the boat gave up all for lost.¹ Again as the disciples were toiling and rowing at midnight, in one of those sudden and violent tempests for which this lake is noted, Jesus came to them walking upon the sea; and, when Peter tried to go to him, Jesus saved him from sinking;² at Cana of Galilee, Jesus changed water into wine;³ twice he multiplied the loaves and fishes so that once four thousand, and again five

¹ Matt. viii. 23-27; Mark iv. 36-41; Luke viii. 22-25.

² Matt. xiv. 22-33; Mark vi. 45-56; John vi. 18-21.

³ John ii. 1-12.

thousand men, were fed.¹ On the way from Bethany to Jerusalem, Jesus cursed a fig-tree, and it withered away.² Now, all these cases, so different in their form and circumstances, agree in this,—that material things were acted upon directly by the *will* of Jesus, in a way entirely different from the laws of nature. There is no power of nature by which water could be turned into wine; there is no power of nature by which loaves of bread could be multiplied in the hands of men who were breaking and distributing them: yet both these marvels took place without any visible act of Jesus capable of producing such results. That the power of gravity should be suspended, so that a man could walk upon the sea instead of sinking, and could lift up another man who was sinking at his side, shows that a law of nature, which is uniform and universal, was brought under some higher power. There could be no natural connection between the word of a man, and the withering of a tree that was covered with fresh foliage. Hence all these miracles agree in showing the power of spirit over matter, to change its forms, its qualities, its relations, without using any of the laws or processes of nature, and even by setting these laws aside: in one word, we here see effects of a power like that put forth in creation. But who is able

¹ Matt. xiv. 15–21, xv. 32–39; Mark vi. 30–46, viii. 1–9; Luke ix. 10–17; John vi. 1–14.

² Matt. xxi. 18–22; Mark xi. 12–14, 20–26.

to prove that spirit in its highest manifestation does not possess such power over matter?

In the suprising draught of fishes twice repeated, and in the catching of a fish with a piece of money in its mouth, the wonder was in knowing at the moment where to direct the disciples to throw in the net, or in so controlling the movements of the fish as to bring them within the net at the very moment. In either case this, though differing from a direct act of creative power, was a something beyond the common range of human power and skill.¹

Another and a larger series of the miracles of Jesus was performed upon the bodies of men: indeed, we are left to infer that by far the greater part of his wonderful works was wrought for the relief of human suffering. Though the number of miracles left on record is small, they cover such a variety of cases as to show the control of Jesus over every form of human sickness and infirmity and over death itself. Six cases are recorded of his giving sight to blind men; and in one of these the man had been born blind.² One instance is given of curing a deaf and dumb person;³ two, of healing the palsy;⁴ one, of the dropsy;⁵ three, of other long and hopeless infirmities;⁶ two, at least,

¹ Luke v. 1-11; John xxi. 1; Matt. xvii. 24-27.

² Matt. ix. 27-31. xx. 29-34; Mark vii. 31-35, viii. 22-26, x. 46-52; Luke xviii. 35-43; John ix. 1-41.

³ Mark vii. 31-37. ⁴ Matt. viii. 5-13, ix. 1-8. ⁵ Luke xiv. 1-6.

⁶ Matt. ix. 20-22; Luke xiii. 10-17; John v. 1-14.

of healing that loathsome and incurable disease, the leprosy;¹ and three, of curing persons who were given over by their friends as in the last stages of mortal sickness.²

That strange infirmity, partly mental, partly physical, which the Jews ascribed to the possession of demons or devils, called forth in a marked degree the compassion and the power of Jesus. This possession seems to have affected the brain and other organs of the body, in ways quite beyond the control of the sufferer, and beyond the skill of physicians. In two of the cases recorded, the victim was dumb, or blind and dumb.³ In the other four cases, the sufferer showed violent and frightful symptoms of insanity.⁴ But in all these cases there was something that distinguished them from common cases of infirmity, of insanity, or other disease, — a something which led the people to say of the sufferer, “He hath a devil.” Jesus treated these uniformly as cases of this strange sort of possession; and it was looked upon as a most wonderful sign of his power, that he could cast out devils. And such indeed it was; for this showed his power to reach not only over all physical nature, but over the hidden world of spirits.

But, of all the wonders performed by Jesus, the most

¹ Matt. viii. 1-4; Luke xvii. 11-19.

² Matt. viii. 14-17; Luke viii. 43, 44; John iv. 46-54.

³ Matt. ix. 32-34, xii. 22-37.

⁴ Matt. viii. 28-34, xv. 21-28, xvii. 14-21; Mark i. 23-28.

astounding was the raising the dead. Not to speak here of his own resurrection (which will be the subject of a later chapter), three times he brought back others from death to life. In the first case, the daughter of Jairus was dead before he reached the house, and had been so long dead that friends and neighbors had gathered together, and were lamenting her loss, weeping and wailing greatly. When Jesus said, "She is not dead, but sleepeth," they were angry with him for trifling with their grief, *knowing* that she was dead; but, in the presence of her parents and three of his disciples, he took her by the hand, and called upon her to arise; and "straightway she arose and walked."¹

In the second case, the people of Nain were carrying a dead man to the burial-place outside of the city. The young man was well known; and great sympathy was felt for his widowed mother, who had now lost her only son. Jesus halted the bier, and called upon the young man to arise; and "he that was dead sat up, and began to speak."² In the third case, Lazarus had been dead four days; and his body, bound in grave-clothes, was lying in the tomb, which was covered with a stone. Jesus had the stone rolled away; and then he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth;" and he that was dead came forth.³ Now, in all these cases, nothing was seen or heard but the simple word of Jesus calling upon the dead person to arise;

¹ Mark v. 22-43.² Luke vii. 11-15.³ John xi. 1-46.

and in each case the effect was instantaneous. As soon as Jesus spoke, the dead person arose in perfect life and health. But there is no power in nature, and no agency known to man, for putting life into a dead body ; nor can we imagine any connection between a word spoken by a man, and an effect so astounding. It was the will of Jesus that possessed this marvellous power, a power entirely above and apart from all the laws and forces of nature as known and observed by men,—the power of spirit over matter, the power of God himself in the creation of life.

Looking closely at the miracles of Jesus, we find that they were all performed openly. They were not like the wonders which Mohammed *reported* that he had seen or done in the night, with none present to witness them ; not like the marvels that spiritists perform in darkened rooms or closed cabinets or behind screens : but these wonders were done openly, in the light of day, in the presence of many witnesses, without any previous notice or preparation, and without any air of secrecy or mystery. The miracles of Jesus were such as men's senses could perceive and take notice of : men who had known a blind man, a lame man, a paralytic, could see that he was cured ; those who had seen a dead man could see if he was alive again. There was no possible mistake about such miracles : they were widely talked about, and they were put upon record by eye-witnesses, while thousands who had seen them were

yet living. These miracles were performed during a period of three or four years ; and in the presence of enemies, as well as friends. They were never done for show, nor for any personal advantage, but always either for a benevolent purpose, or for some high moral lesson. Never were they mere displays of power ; and yet these mighty works do show forth the divine power of Jesus ; they agree perfectly with his character and his doctrines ; they seem natural to such a person ; and they are written in the story of his life that we “ might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through his name.”¹

We are apt to say, “ If *I* could only see a miracle, I would believe.” But we deceive ourselves in this. Many, many, saw the miracles of Jesus, and did not believe. Had miracles been continued, they would soon have become mere commonplace events. I, for instance, can remember the first railroad, the first telegraph, the first steamship across the Atlantic, the laying of the first Atlantic cable ; and each in turn was looked upon as so great a wonder that it was celebrated with flags and cannon, with banquets and holidays. But, to the child of to-day, the railroad and the steamship seem to have existed always ; and telegraph-poles are as natural as the trees along the roadside. Had miracles continued, they would have become a law of events in

¹ John xx. 31.

connection with the Christian faith; and nobody would have paid attention to them. If it were usual for the dead to rise, we should not go to the graveyard to witness the fact, but should await their return at home as from any other journey. Hence Jesus did not cheapen miracles, did not make them common; used them only to show his love for men, and to prove that he came from God. The last and greatest miracle, his rising from the dead, establishes all the rest. To Him who rose from the dead, it was a small thing to make water into wine, to heal diseases, to walk upon the sea. Yet of this, the greatest of miracles, he said to the doubting Thomas, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." The standing evidence of Christianity, the proof that it came from God, is in the life of Jesus and in his words.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

GREAT were the wonders that Jesus did ; but the greatest wonder is what Jesus himself was. His miracles served, so to speak, to introduce him to men in his proper personality ; yet, on the other hand, his person and character, his heart and life, shone through his miracles, and caused these to appear in their real nature and worth. When we read how this man had absolute power over the physical creation ; how at a word and look, yes, at the simple will of Jesus without any outward act, the blind were made to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, the lame to walk ; how the sea grew calm, how bread was multiplied, water was turned to wine, the fig-tree was blasted, lepers were cleansed, devils were cast out, the dead were raised,—when we begin to realize all this, we feel that Jesus was more than man, or, if man, was filled with the power of God. Yet when we look more closely, we feel that these wonders were not of themselves the strongest point in the life of Jesus, and that even in the miracles there is a deeper ground

of admiration than their supernatural power. Such power over nature and man was not peculiar to Jesus. In the ten plagues of Egypt, in dividing the Red Sea, in drawing water from a rock, in healing a death-plague by the brazen serpent, Moses showed the same control over physical bodies and agencies as did Jesus. Elijah ascended bodily to heaven; and Elisha healed the leprosy, and raised the dead. Peter healed a lame man at the gate of the temple, and restored Dorcas to life; and the sick and those vexed with unclean spirits were brought to the disciples and were healed.¹ But these prophets and apostles never did wonders in their own name, nor by their own power; but every wonder was a distinct act of divine power working in and through them as its instruments. It was a gift for the time; and they never pretended that it made them divine. But in Jesus all such acts were normal and personal; the power was in and of himself, — a part of his being. Men saw this in his eyes; they felt this in his tones; they recognized this in the way in which he performed wonders, without invoking any power outside of himself. Even at the grave of Lazarus, he said, "*I* am the resurrection and the life;" and then by his own will he commanded the dead man to come forth.²

The use which Jesus made of miraculous power showed behind this a moral power and a personal goodness greater

¹ Acts ix. 32-42.

² John xi. 25.

than the miracle. Conscious of illimitable power, he was perfectly unselfish in the use of it. He never used it merely *as* power nor for fame, and never, never for gain. He who could multiply the loaves for five thousand men refused to create bread for himself in the wilderness; he who had control over the kingdoms of nature, of death, and of hell, refused to be made a king by the crowd who adored his power. Even the few miracles of judgment and destruction which he wrought were not to strike terror for his name, but to teach a moral lesson;¹ and the great bulk of his miracles was for direct objects of benevolence. In these he showed a deep and tender sympathy for the sufferers; he "had compassion" upon those whom he helped. He wept with Martha and Mary, even as he was about to give back their brother from the grave. But, the more he put himself in sympathy with men, the more did they feel him to be above them. The intimacy which his disciples had with him for three years increased their reverence for him as a higher being. They saw that his mighty works before the people were but the quiet acting of his own nature, the revelation of his spiritual life. And so the feeling dawned upon his disciples that this was the Christ, the Son of God.

This feeling grew to conviction in the minds of three of the disciples, who witnessed a scene that belongs to Jesus alone, and yet seems to have been only another natural

¹ Mark v. 11-17, xi. 20-26.

expression of his true inner nature. Copies, engravings, and photographs have made every child familiar with Raphael's picture of the transfiguration, so wonderful in the expression of the countenance of Jesus, in the buoyancy of his figure in the cloud, and in the blending of the divine with the human through the scene of glory on the top of the mountain, and the scene of suffering and compassion at its base. Yet the transfiguration as described by the evangelists was something more lofty and more glorious far than "the transfiguration" as painted by Raphael. As a symbol of the whole life and work of Jesus, the combining of heavenly glory, human misery, and healing mercy upon the same canvas, makes Raphael's picture truly marvellous as a work of art; but for the actual scene it looks too much as if Jesus in the cloud were set up on exhibition with a gaping crowd below. Now, in fact, the scene had no witnesses but the three disciples whom Jesus took with him "up into a high mountain apart by themselves."¹ This solitariness is a feature of its majesty; and the narrative, as coming from these eye-witnesses, is so sublime in its simplicity that to touch it is to mar it.

For this was not a dream, like Jacob's, where the fancy is at liberty to weave a ladder from earth to heaven, and to play about it with troops of angels. The disciples had been asleep;² but what they describe took place afterwards.

¹ Mark ix. 2.

² Luke ix. 32.

Perhaps the sudden light woke them ; and “ when they were awake they saw his glory.”¹ There was Jesus transfigured before them, his face shining like the sun, and his raiment white as the light,² and glistening as snow.³ At his side were two men talking with him, who were made known to them as Moses and Elias.⁴ Peter, who always was forward to say something, as soon as the first amazement was over, in an ecstacy of joy at such glory and such company, said to Jesus, “ Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three tabernacles : one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.” But, while he was speaking, a tent such as was never wrought by human hands — a cloud of glory — covered them ; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “ This is my beloved Son : hear him.” Overcome with fear, the disciples fell on their faces, and saw and heard no more till “ Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.” His dear, familiar voice re-assured them, and they lifted up their eyes ; but the cloud had vanished. Moses and Elias were gone ; and they saw no man save Jesus alone.⁵

In the whole scene, though the supernatural is blended with the natural, and heaven is brought down to earth, the connection of *reality* is never for one moment lost. At every point Jesus is still known to the disciples ; though

¹ Luke ix. 32.² Matt. xvii. 2.³ Mark ix. 3.⁴ Luke ix. 29.⁵ Matt. xvii. 1-9.

“the fashion of his countenance is altered” by the brightness that beams from it, they never lose sight of him, nor mistake him for an angel. At the very height of the splendor, Peter addresses him as Master; and when the cloud has vanished Jesus is there alone, looking just as he did when he had walked up the mountain with them. The person of Jesus was the link that bound heaven and earth together. Both worlds were alike natural to him; Moses and Elias no more strangers than Peter, James, and John; the white and glittering raiment no more strange than his common peasant’s dress; and the voice that spoke from the cloud, and filled the disciples with terror, was just as real as the gentle tones of Jesus himself. Years after, Peter, in a letter to all believers, put this again on record, as he had before given it to Mark for his Gospel. “We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with him in the holy mount.”¹

The real wonder of this scene lies in its moral meaning; and it must be interpreted by the time and the circum-

¹ 2 Pet. i. 16-18.

stances in which it took place. Just as the disciples seemed to have broken through the mystery of their Master's being, and to have found him more than man, Jesus threw around himself another mystery too strange to be understood, too sad to be believed. Peter, speaking for the rest, had said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God;" and Jesus not only admitted that he was the Christ, but said this had been directly revealed to Peter by his Father in heaven.¹ No doubt the disciples now began to look forward to his setting up the kingdom of Israel with the power and splendor predicted by Ezekiel and Isaiah;² but, as far as ever from talking about earthly power and kingly glory, this "Son of the living God" began to speak of himself as the "Son of man," and to teach his disciples that he "must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests and scribes, and be killed."³ This was a great shock to their feelings and their hopes. True, Jesus always added that on the third day he "should rise again."⁴ But either the disciples did not understand his meaning, or the thought that their Lord and King should suffer and die so oppressed them with disappointment and sadness that their hearts sank within them. So strong was this feeling in Peter that he broke out in a passionate remonstrance, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee;"⁵ but Jesus so

¹ Matt. xvi. 16-18.

² Isa. ix., xi., xl.; Ezek. xxxvi., xxxvii.

³ Mark viii. 31.

⁴ Mark viii. 32.

⁵ Matt. xvi. 22.

much the more gave to his disciples the sad and earnest view of his life and his service, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."¹ Yet, along with the solemn warning that they should lose their lives for his sake, he foretold that "the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."² With such words and thoughts as familiar to us as any thing in the life of Jesus, and so clearly explained by all that followed, it is hard to realize how they puzzled and distressed that little band of disciples. Every thing seemed to be involved in mystery and contradiction: on the one hand, power to raise the dead; on the other, a weakness that would submit to suffer and to die: on the one hand, "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" given to the disciples; on the other, the warning that they must "take up the cross," and be ready to lose their lives for their Master: on the one hand, he shall be killed; on the other, he shall rise again: on the one hand, "the Son of God," on the other, "the Son of man." While they were yet puzzling over these strange and conflicting sayings, Jesus took the three disciples up into the mountain, and was transfigured before them. Then they saw how in him two natures, two beings, were united: how, in a moment, he could pass into the heavenly state, and shine with the brightness of the sun, and in the

¹ Matt. xvi. 24.² Matt. xvi. 27.

next moment be standing at their side with the familiar face of every day ; how the messengers of heaven came to honor and to serve him, and yet talked of his going to Jerusalem to die ; how the voice of the infinite and invisible Father could startle them saying, " This is my beloved Son : hear him," and in the next moment the familiar tones of Jesus could comfort them, saying, " Arise, and be not afraid." Thus the transfiguration was the key to the mysteries that had gathered about the life of Jesus, and that now overshadowed it with the gloom of death. Midway between the lowliness of the manger and the cross rose this mount of light and glory to interpret and illumine both.

And, while the transfiguration thus mediated between the divine and the human in the person of Christ, it set him forth as the Mediator between the Old Testament and the New. With him were disciples who were also chosen to be the apostles of his gospel ; and to this company, which represented the Church of Christ, came Moses the lawgiver, and Elias the prophet, to show that their teachings and promises now centred in the Son of God, whom all must hear and obey. Elias had been carried up to heaven in a chariot of fire : and Moses had disappeared from men upon the top of Nebo : nothing of the pain or the weakness of death was associated with their memory. They were numbered with the immortals ; but here they appeared in the likeness of men, so that they became known to the disciples as Moses

and Elias ; they had the most lively and tender interest in the coming death of Jesus. And thus they showed how the past and the future in faith and in service, how saints in heaven and believers on earth, how the whole kingdom of God above and below, in time and for eternity, formed one sublime and perfect whole about the person and the work of Jesus.

As this wondrous vision was the key to the nature and the mission of Jesus, revealing the union of the divine with the human, so does it present Jesus himself as the key to the higher life that is enshrined within our own mortality. The faith that joins us to the life of Christ shall enable us to share his glory also : we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. The Son of God and the Son of man, equally at home in heaven and on earth, passing and repassing from one world to the other, making heaven real to us as the home of his Father, and making this world dear to saints in heaven as the scene of his own life and death, Jesus takes away from us our natural nervous dread of the unseen, and helps us to see in death itself a transfiguration by which the soul passes into a cloud only to shine with the brightness of the sun. And if at the last our sensitive natures should feel a shudder of dread at the very glory that overshadows them, if we have obeyed the voice of the Son of God, then, too, shall the voice of the Son of man, full of human sympathy, re-assure us, saying, " Arise : be not afraid."

Once, among the Alps, I seemed to see this heavenly vision, almost to hear this heavenly voice. Starting with the dawn for the summit of the *Col des Fours*, I had seen the great white dome of Mont Blanc lit up by the rising sun, while all the world beside still lay in shadow ; and, as I stood at a level with the *Col de la Seigne*, this ridge cut off every thing but that dome, which seemed spread out above it like a pavilion for angels, — so high, so pure, so glistening, so glorious ! I could not bear to turn away from the fascination of the view ; it seemed but a step to that pavilion of light, and from that but another step into the clear blue heaven above.

When I reached the top of the pass, and turned toward the opposite side, there lay before me one sea of cloud, in which the highest peaks of the *Tarantaise* were swimming like islands of snow trimmed with borders of green. Far as the eye could reach, the clouds were rolling like billows, and breaking like spray upon the mountain tops. I stood between two heavens, — the heaven of blue above, so bright, so wide, so clear ; the heaven of cloud beneath, so vast, so deep, so dark, hiding the earth in its folds, yet on its surface flashing as with the brightness of a thousand suns. At length the mist rose up and covered me, so that I was wrapped in darkness. I could no longer see my way, could hardly see the ground on which I stood. I only knew there was a precipice near by, and an abyss of gloom below ;

and "I feared as I entered into the cloud." Suddenly the sun, which had never ceased to shine, turned his whole brightness direct on me, not scattering the cloud, but making this luminous with a light too dazzling for the eye. I seemed compassed about with glory ; and from that glory came a voice speaking what no man can utter, to the wondering, waiting soul. I went on my way rejoicing, and was no more afraid.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE FRIENDS OF JESUS.

YES, this "Son of God" was indeed the "Son of man," — so human in his sympathy and love, in all that is noblest, finest, best in humanity, as no other man has ever been. Not for effect upon their senses or their imagination, nor to inspire their homage for himself, but for their assurance under present grief and their consolation after his death, had Jesus given his disciples the vision of his divine glory upon the mount. And, when the vision was over, he would not suffer the witnesses to make a sensation by reporting it; but "he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead."¹ And he whom all men should hear and obey as the Son of God, the prophet greater than Elias, the law-giver greater than Moses, came down from the splendor of his Father's presence, from hearing his Father's voice, to plunge again into the sorrows and miseries of men, to listen to the cry of a poor stranger for mercy on his son,

¹ Mark ix. 9.

“Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief,” and to cast out a demon from his wretched lunatic boy.¹ And the next we read of him, he is giving his disciples a lesson of humility by setting before them a little child as their teacher and example.²

Now, this gentle, loving man, who was the friend of everybody, himself had need of friends; and he found friends, though they were few, and most of them could do little more than give him their love. But not all his disciples were poor. Matthew the tax-gatherer was rich enough to have a house of his own, and to give a “great feast” in honor of Jesus;³ and, among the women whom he had “healed of evil spirits and infirmities,” some who followed him in his journeys were able to “minister to him of their substance.”⁴ Among these was Mary Magdalene, who had means freely to show her gratitude, and could lavish a costly box of ointment upon the head of her deliverer; and Joanna, whose husband held a lucrative post as the steward of King Herod. Some men of wealth and influence, such as Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea, were also friendly to Jesus; and, though they were kept back by caution from joining his disciples at the first, they did come out openly upon his side when there was the greatest risk in doing so.⁵ The spices that embalmed his body, the linen in which it

¹ Mark ix. 14-29.

² Mark ix. 33-37.

³ Luke v. 29.

⁴ Luke viii. 2, 3.

⁵ John vii. 50; xix. 38-42.



HE SET A LITTLE CHILD IN THE MIDST OF THEM.

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was wrapped, the new sepulchre in which it was laid, were all provided by these rich and noble friends.

But there was one family, consisting of a brother and two sisters, in which Jesus had truly a home,—his favorite resort for rest and refreshment during his visits to Jerusalem. Facing the city from the east, and rising some two hundred feet above its level, is the Mount of Olives, between which and the Temple Mount is the narrow and steep ravine of the Kedron, through which, in the rainy season, the brook still flows. From the summit of the Mount of Olives, in going to the east, one descends at first into a sort of basin, then mounts a second ridge more or less wooded, and from this descends again into another hollow, or plateau, which is planted with oaks, olives, almonds, and pomegranates. Here the path over the summit falls into the broader path or road which winds over the southern shoulder of the mountain, and now drops suddenly down the steep descent to Jericho. From this high plateau one looks into the deep valley of the Jordan, and over to the mountains of Moab, which stand like a rampart on the other side. Here, on the verge of desolation, the very outpost of human habitations, overhanging the dreary wilderness of Judea, yet snugly sheltered from the northern and western winds, and feeling the tropical warmth of the valley below, was perched the village of Bethany,—once embosomed in palm-trees, and hence called “the House of Dates.” And here it was that

Jesus loved to go after he had been teaching in the temple, had been disputing with the scribes and Pharisees, or perhaps had met a rough and angry mob. The first mention of Bethany introduces us to the two sisters of the family, — Martha the housekeeper, and Mary the learner. “He entered into a certain village; and a certain woman, named Martha, received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word.”¹ The elder of these sisters was an active, bustling, earnest woman, whose pride was in her housekeeping and her hospitality. She was what nowadays would be called “a strong character,” having a will and a way of her own, and wishing to have those around her conform to her notions of what was proper. But this natural temperament shows itself in a devotion to Jesus no less real and sincere than that of her more quiet and docile sister. At a time when there was much dissension about Jesus, when the scribes and Pharisees were stirring up the people against him, and to be upon his side was far from popular, then Martha gladly opened her house, and served him with the best that she had, — served him so eagerly as to be almost officious, thrusting her household cares upon the notice of her guest, and yet honoring him no less than did the sister who sat at his feet, and looked up into his eyes that she might catch his every word into her soul. With her

¹ Luke x. 38, 39.

whole soul, Martha sought to comfort and refresh the body of her much-loved guest; while Mary's love forgot that he had a body, in her eagerness to feed her own soul from his lips. With such a servant and such a disciple, Jesus found that little cottage at Bethany a welcome home; and the master of the house shared his confidence and affection. "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." The message of the sisters, "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick," shows how Jesus had taken this family to his heart; and, when he stood weeping and groaning by the grave of Lazarus, even the neighbors said, "Behold how he loved him!"

The death of Lazarus brought out the love of Jesus in all its strength and tenderness, and also brought out again the traits of the two sisters as strongly as when Jesus first visited at their house. The moment Lazarus seemed in danger, his sisters hurried a messenger to Jesus, feeling sure that he would save their brother's life. And when all was over, and Lazarus was in his grave, though Jesus came too late for their help, both showed the same confidence in his power and love, the same faith mingling with their grief; and, as each met him in turn, her heart told all its love, and all its trust, and all its loss, in the cry, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died!" Yet, even in this common sorrow, Martha is Martha, and Mary is Mary. They were sitting together

in the house, with friends who had come from Jerusalem to comfort them, when word was brought that Jesus was coming. As soon as she heard this, Martha sprang up, and hurried out to meet him before he had entered the town. There she began at once to give her belief of what Jesus could have done, and even yet could do, talking in her quick, positive way of the resurrection, as if she knew all that Jesus could tell her. Yet she declared her belief in him as "the Christ, the Son of God." Martha was not wanting in the religious spirit; she was not at all worldly; her faith was as strong as Mary's; perhaps she went beyond Mary in the feeling that it was not too late for Jesus to help them. But her temperament pushed her forward; and even when they stood at the grave, and Jesus, groaning in himself, said, "Take ye away the stone," she could not help meddling, and remonstrating against opening the tomb after four days.

Mary, always meek and pensive, when she heard that Jesus was coming, "sat still in the house." Her heart was too full for such a meeting; and she could only wait in reverent silence till Jesus should appear. But, when Jesus sent for her, she hastened to him, and, with one cry from her bursting heart, she fell down at his feet, and wept. At the grave she has nothing to say; but when all the excitement of that wondrous day is over, and she is sitting again at evening in the house with Lazarus beside her, and Jesus before her, —



MARY HATH CHOSEN THE GOOD PART

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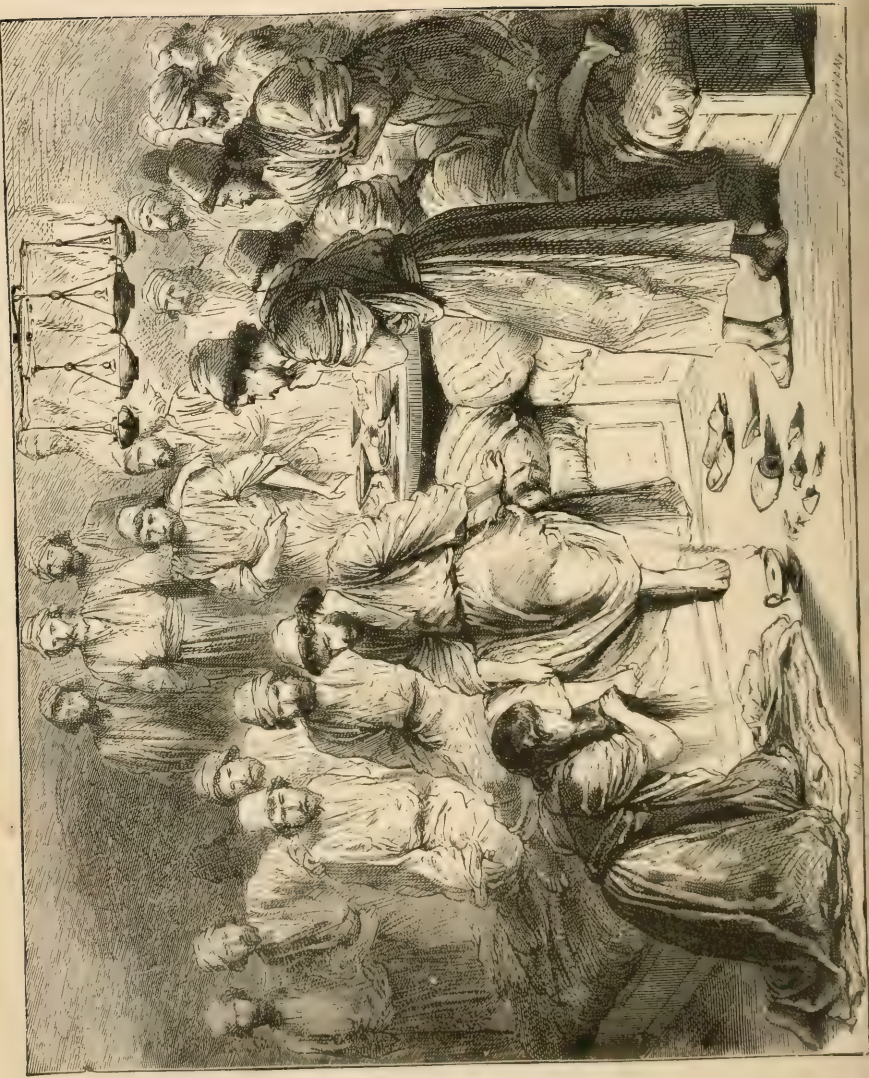
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JOHN R. DICKINSON

“ Her eyes are homes of silent prayer;
Nor other thought her mind admits,
But ‘he was dead, and there he sits,
And He that brought him back is there.’

Then one deep love doth supersede
All other, when her ardent gaze
Roves from the living brother’s face,
And rests upon the Life indeed.”

Some time after, we are once more admitted to this family circle at Bethany, when a supper was made for Jesus and his disciples. And here, again, while Lazarus sat at the table, “Martha served,” looking after the comfort of the guests; but Mary, overflowing with gratitude to her brother’s Saviour and her own, having provided a box of the most fragrant and precious ointment, forgetting every one in her love for him, stole gently behind the couch where Jesus was reclining at the table, and, kneeling before them all, “anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair.”¹ In this little circle of domestic quiet and affection, Jesus spent the last evenings of his life; going in the morning to Jerusalem, there teaching, warning, prophesying, and toward evening taking the lovely walk over the Kedron and the Mount of Olives to this home of peace. Here he could rest from toil and care; could hide

¹ John xii. 1-3.

himself from the malice of his enemies; could brace himself in the fresh, free air of the mountains; could commune in solitude with Nature and with his Father; and, looking out over the wilderness of his temptation, could gather strength for his coming conflicts by the memory of his victory there.

We could never have felt how human, how loving, how with and of ourselves, Jesus was, had we not seen him in the bosom of the family of Bethany, seeking and finding the sheltering love of an earthly home. And we should have missed the purest, fondest link that binds him to our nature, that marks him as man complete in his humanity, had we not seen him needing and receiving the gentle, holy, devoted love and trust of woman. Without this Jesus would have seemed to us more like an angel than a man; or, at least, like some being apart and distinct from our race, too lofty for us to comprehend him, too distant for us to know him. But, with the Mary at Bethlehem, and the Mary at Bethany, and the Marys at the cross and at the sepulchre, his life begins and closes with what to every earthly life at its beginning and its ending is nearest and dearest,—the sacred passion of woman's love.

Yet while he is thus identified with us in his need and his experience of earthly friendships, he has taught us that they who are nearest to him in the service of his Father are nearest to him also in the ties of love. These are his

family; “for whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother.”¹

¹ Matt. xii. 50.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE LAST JOURNEY.

FOR three years Jesus had now been before the public as a teacher; and his name was known in every village and every home of Palestine. He had gone over a good part of the land on foot with his disciples, and wherever he halted had talked of the kingdom of heaven, either in the synagogue or by the wayside, so that thousands upon thousands had seen his face and heard his voice. Besides these preaching-tours in the country, he had gone to Jerusalem once or twice a year at the great festivals, and at such times had been seen and heard by the throngs then gathered from all parts of Palestine, and from other lands, wherever the Jews were scattered abroad. By birth a Jew, Jesus was in heart and life a patriot; and he gave his time and labors first of all and most of all to his countrymen, seeking to reform their religion and their lives, and so to save them from the judgments that sooner or later come upon nations that forsake truth, justice, and virtue. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that

JESUS GOES BEFORE THEM TO JERUSALEM.



John 13:36

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are sent unto thee! how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" The earnestness of his warnings showed the tenderness of his love.

Only twice did Jesus go over the borders of the land of Israel, and this, to teach his disciples that, though his mission was first to the Jews, his gospel was for man, and should be preached to all nations alike. Once he went into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, the land of the Phœnicians, who were idolaters, and while there he heard the cry of a poor Pagan mother for "the crumbs from the Master's table," he healed her daughter, and taught that faith had the same power, and love had the same pity, for the heathen and the Jew.

Again, he went into the region of Cesarea Philippi, by Mount Hermon, away to the north of Lake Tiberias, where was a mixed population of Phœnicians, Syrians, Greeks, and Jews. Here was a world in miniature, — a type of his work, — so many races and religions to be subdued to one brotherhood and one faith; so much of the splendor of art, of luxury, and of power, to array the kingdom of Mammon against the kingdom of God; and yet, around and above all this, so much of beauty, of bounty, and of grandeur in nature, to comfort his soul with the love and the majesty of his Father. It was in this region, as we have seen, — probably upon one of the summits of Mount Hermon,

— that Jesus was transfigured ; and it was on one of these neighboring plains, after his disciples had tried in vain to cast out a devil, that he cured the lunatic boy ; and then, pointing to Hermon, said to them, “ If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed,” if your spirit has the tiniest hold upon the power of God, like that of a little child upon the arm of his father, “ ye shall say unto this mountain,” this mighty mass of earth and rock, of forest and snow, that lifts itself ten thousand feet above the sea, “ ye shall say to this, Remove hence to yonder place ; and it shall remove ; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.” These sublime scenes of nature, suggesting the fresh, living, unwasted power of God, were made more sublime by this association with the faith, the grace, and the glory of the Son of man. Indeed, the chief interest, to us, of the region of Cesarea Philippi, lies in the fact that Jesus was there. But we will try to look upon it with his eyes.

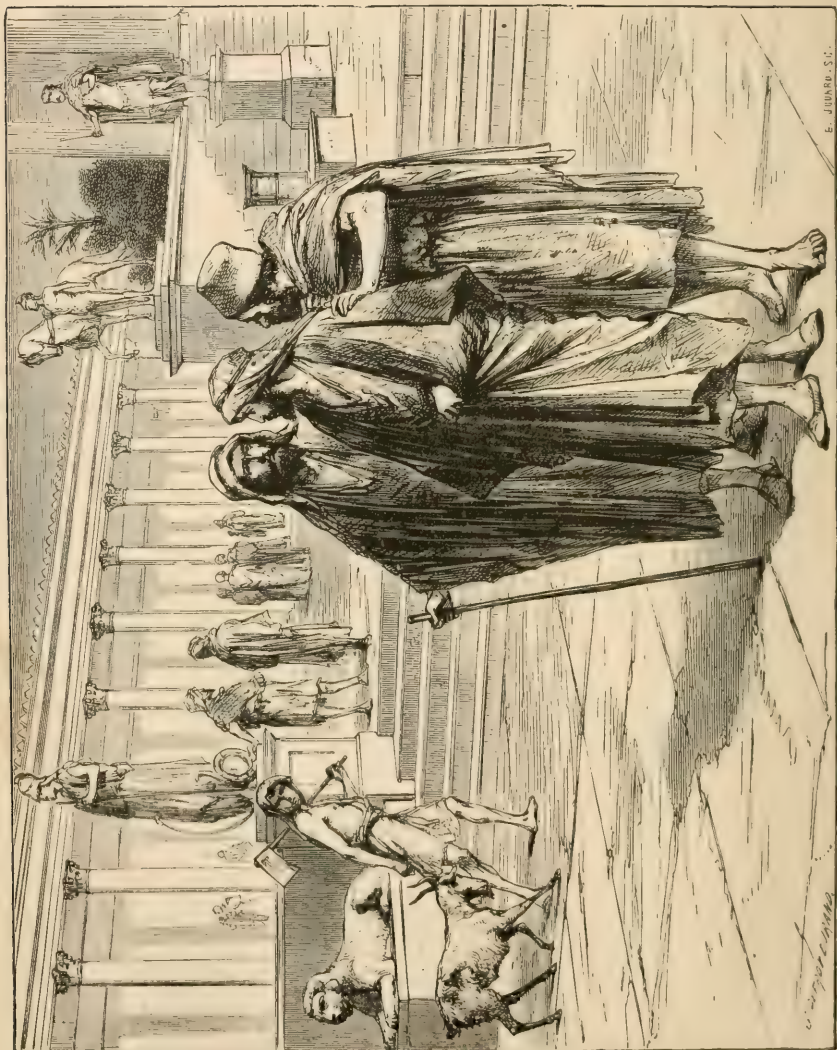
From the westward ridge of the great Hermon, two wild, deep gorges that seem to cleave the mountain to its base, one opening to the north, the other to the south, come out upon a broad, fertile terrace, here built by nature between the mountain and the plain ; and, at the north-eastern edge of this, a third ravine forms an angle where a bold cliff of limestone stands up like a natural fortress. From a dark cavern at the base of this cliff, a volume of pure and sparkling water gushes forth, and, tumbling swiftly down the

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rocky ravine, goes to join other streams that form the River Jordan. Hardly any point in Syria combines so many features of beauty within so small a compass,—the well-watered terrace with its carpet of green, kept fresh by the dews of Hermon; the groves of olives and of terebinths, the clusters of hawthorn and myrtle, the bright oleanders set round with wreaths of ferns, the deep, wild ravines, the rushing waters filling the air with the music of their fall; in the foreground, a broad plain checkered with clumps of trees and fields of grain, and threaded with silvery streams; in the background, the giant summits that rise from five thousand to eight thousand feet above the terrace, the lower ridges clothed with forests, the great central dome capped with snow. Here, among these groves and grottos, the Phœnicians had set up the worship of Baal; here, at this very cave of the fountain, the Greeks built a temple to Pan, the god of the woods and streams, and named the place Panium, or Panias. Here Herod the Great had his first capital, when he was governor of this part of Syria, before he made himself master of Jerusalem; and here he built a fine marble temple in honor of the Emperor Augustus. When the kingdom of Herod was divided, his son Philip had the region north-east of Lake Tiberias as his portion, and he made Panias his capital, but changed its name to Cesarea in honor of the emperor; and then added his own name, Cesarea *Philippi*, to distinguish this from the city of

Cesarea on the seacoast. After the death of Philip, its name was changed to *Neronias*, as a compliment to Nero; then it passed into *Cesarea Panias*; and now for a long time it has been known only as *Banias*. This bit of history and geography comes in here to witness how fully the Gospels are to be depended on for truth and accuracy even in little things. In the three thousand years since *Panias* was built, there was but one single period of fifty years in which it was called *Cesarea Philippi*, and it gave this name to a district. The life of Jesus fell within this period; and Matthew and Mark, in describing one of his preaching-tours, speak of his going to *Cesarea Philippi*, using for *Panias* the name which had been given only thirty years before, and which twenty years later had ceased to be used.

In the region of that famous and splendid capital of the north, Jesus proclaimed to men of mixed nations and beliefs his gospel as the word of truth and the way of life. There, too, he told his disciples how they must suffer and die, while at the same time he declared that Peter's confession of him as "the Christ, the Son of God," should be the rock on which his church should stand till the end of time.¹

Yes; he must suffer and die. To this strange end this ministry of truth and love at last must come. The rulers, finding they could make nothing of Jesus for themselves, were fully set against him; and his preaching maddened

¹ Matt. xvi. 18.

them more and more. Among the people many followed him with a sort of blind faith, because of the wonders he did, just as a crowd will always run after any thing new and strange ; some clung to him with a true and earnest faith in his words ; while perhaps the greater number were in a state of uncertainty, now ready to think that this doer of wonders must be the Christ, and again vexed that he did not show himself as their king, and help them in their troubles. The raising of Lazarus brought matters to a crisis. We should think that such a miracle must have led all who heard of it to believe on Jesus ; and it did increase the number both of true believers and of curious followers. But it roused his enemies to a furious hatred ; for they saw that their day was over if Jesus should draw the people by such works as these. "If we let him alone," said they, "all men will believe on him ;"¹ and from that day "they took counsel together to put him to death."

At first Jesus shunned them. Not that he feared to die : he expected to be put to death, and was ready to deliver himself whenever his time should come ; but he had yet other things to say to his disciples and to the people ; above all, to instruct his friends as to the meaning of his death, and the coming of his kingdom. And so he left for a while these stormy scenes at Jerusalem, and betook himself to the north, skirting the wilderness that borders upon the Jordan.

¹ John xi. 48-53.

He no longer had a home. Nazareth had cast him out, and he had turned away in discouragement from Capernaum. He had not where to lay his head. But, as he journeyed, a quiet little city of Ephraim, east of Bethel, about sixteen miles from the capital, seems to have offered him rest and safety; and "there he continued with his disciples."¹

But his enemies would soon track him to this retreat; and so he again crossed the Jordan to "the region beyond," or Perea, the ancient Gilead, the home of the tribes of Reuben and Dan. This fine rolling country, now occupied only by roving Bedouins, was then well peopled with towns and villages, the ruins of which are still to be seen. It was famous for its forests, its herds, and its flocks, and afforded the best pasture-land of Palestine. In this rural region, Jesus escaped from the jealousies and conspiracies of the metropolis; but he was now a character of too much notoriety to escape from the people, even had he wished to do so. "Great multitudes followed him; and, as he was wont, he taught them again."² Indeed, he made such a missionary tour in Perea, as he had made before in Galilee; and went "through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem."³ Just at this time, too, the caravans were starting for the passover; and Jesus was attended by eager, listening crowds all along the way. To this last preaching tour, we owe many of his most beautiful

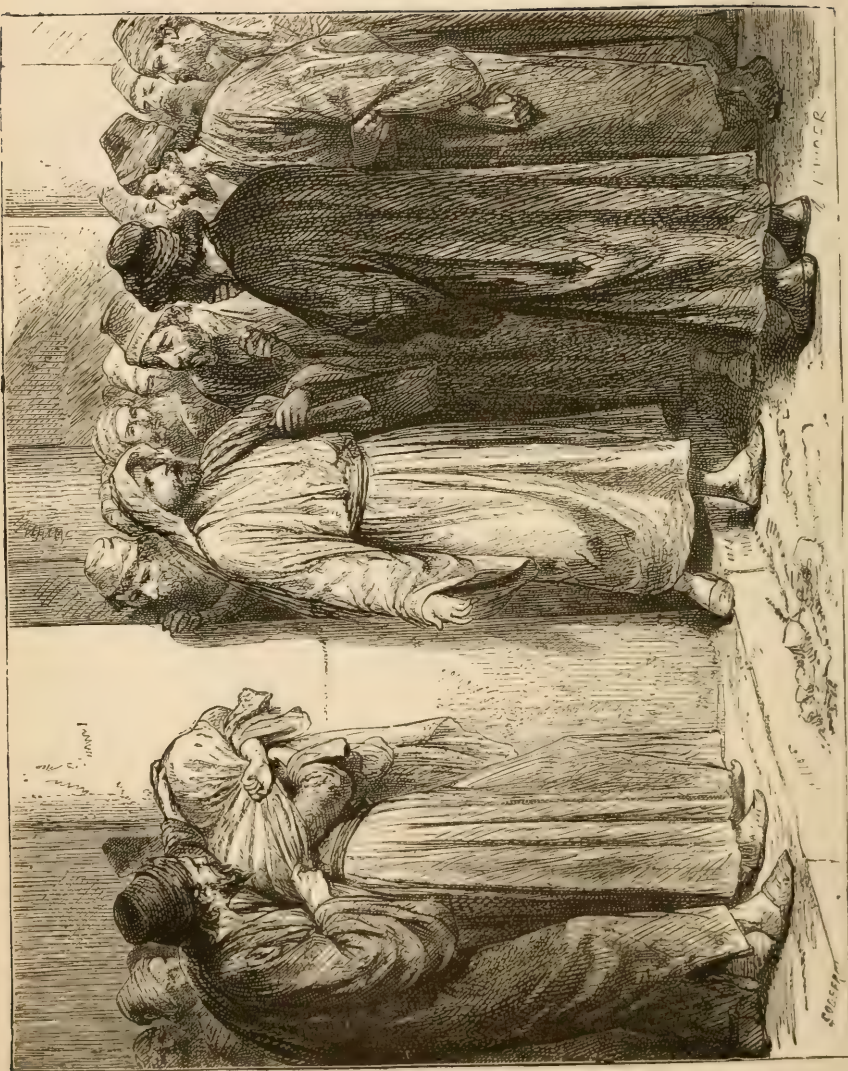
¹ John xi. 54.

² Matt. xix. 1, 2; Mark x. 1.

³ Luke xiii. 22.

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THE PITY OF JESUS FOR SINNERS.

parables, but especially the deeper insight into his life and death which he gave to his disciples, when he took them apart for more personal instruction.

The tone of his preaching was both tender and severe, as from a man who felt how in his own person the truth and grace of his Father had been slighted and abused, who knew the great crime that the religious teachers of the nation were then plotting against him, who knew the woes that must come upon the people for their sins, who felt for them the anguish and the dread of the judgment of the last day, and who in his yearning for their salvation was ready to sacrifice his life. How full of this tender yearning is the parable of the prodigal son, the parable of the great supper, the parable of the praying widow, and that of the humble publican! How in these parables the soul of Jesus melts with compassion for the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, the hungry and homeless in the streets and lanes of the city; for the widow and the fatherless, neglected and wronged; for the sinner, humbled, penitent, praying, returning! How his soul yearns over the rich, noble, and amiable young man who seems to have every thing, yet lacks one thing, and will not do that one thing which would bring heaven to his soul here, and would find him "treasure in heaven"¹ hereafter. How compassionately he lays his hands on the woman bowed with infirmity, and takes the

¹ Mark x. 17-22.

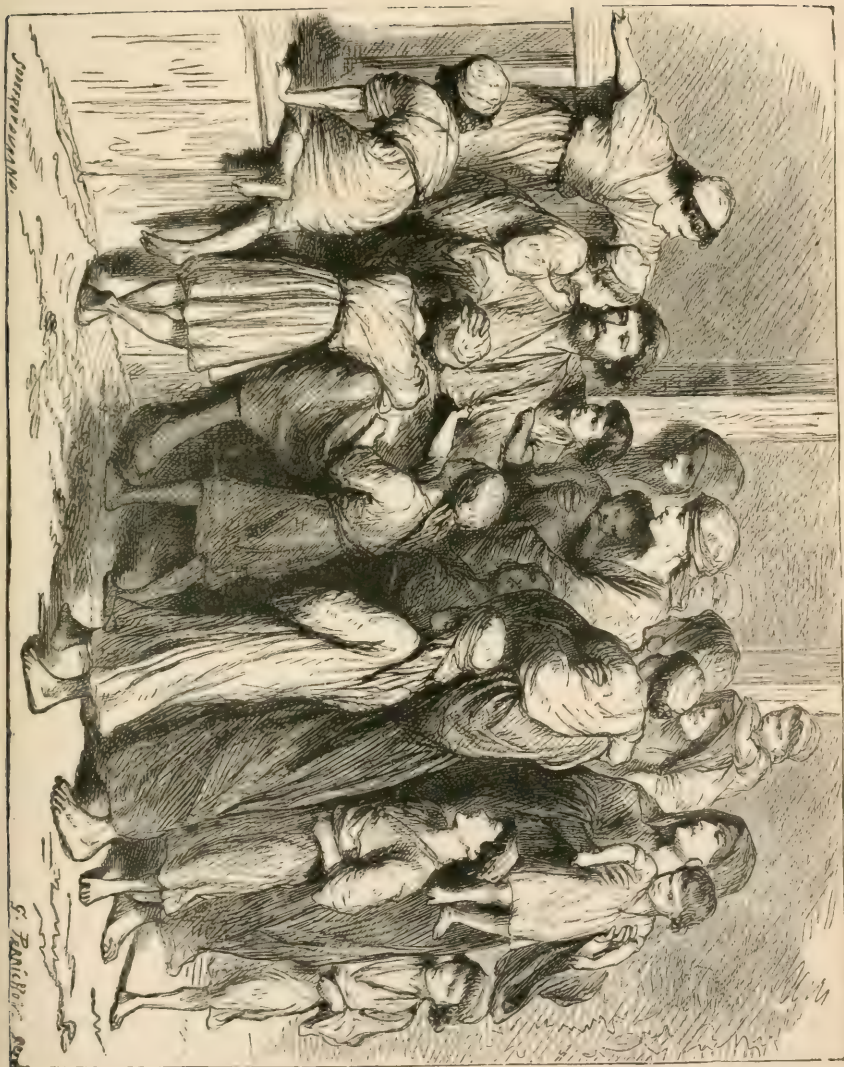
part of the poor and suffering against the proud and scornful! How gently, lovingly, he takes little children in his arms, vexed that his own disciples had pushed back the mothers with their babes!—for Jesus could show anger against meanness and injustice done to the weak and the innocent. Yet how tender is he of the faults of his disciples toward himself, teaching by his example to forgive seven times in a day;¹ and how considerate and generous to those who even at the eleventh hour would enter upon his service!²

Such are the strains of tender, melting love that are wafted to us from beyond the Jordan, as Jesus journeys toward Jerusalem, the “Man of Sorrows,” bearing upon himself our sicknesses and infirmities. With this tenderness come also notes of severity, — reproof and warning in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, in the picture of the coming of the Son of man, and of the last judgment: “Strive to enter in at the strait gate;”³ “Many that are first shall be last, and the last first;” “One shall be taken, and the other left.” Yet this very earnestness of warning shows the intensity of love; and, through all, we hear the deep, solemn, pathetic undertone of wailing over the fate of his enemies: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee!” and

¹ Luke xvii. 3, 4.

² Matt. xx. 9–16.

³ Luke xiii. 24; Matt. xix. 30; Luke xvii. 34.



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now at the last moment he would save her, and “would gather her children together,” though for this he should stretch out his arms upon the cross. That cross was constantly before him; and, apart from any sacrificial purpose or redemptive power in his cross, the moral heroism with which he went forward to meet it lifts him as far above all other heroes and martyrs of the race, as the cross itself is lifted above all other symbols of a sublime ideal triumphing in death. Knowing what shall befall him at Jerusalem; foreseeing all the shameful, brutal aggravations of his sufferings and death,—how he shall be betrayed by one of his disciples unto the chief priests and the scribes; how these religious teachers and leaders of God’s chosen people shall condemn him, as the Son of God, to death; how this sacred tribunal of his own nation shall deliver him to the Gentiles, to a Pagan governor and his insolent foreign guard; how they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him,—knowing and feeling the shame and the pain of this great agony, he calmly tells it all to his disciples, not to relieve his sorrow, but to comfort theirs.

“Thou wilt feel all, that thou mayest pity all!
So to the end, though now of mortal pangs
Made heir, — with unaverted eye
Thou meetest all the storm.”

Yet in the moment of a heroism so self-denying, so

sublime, his own disciples step in to wrest some selfish worldly advantage from his very sacrifice. Passing over the sorrows to come upon him, they seize upon the assurance that he shall rise again; and, coupling this with their old notions of the Messiah, James and John put up their mother to ask for them the first places of honor in his triumph: "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one at thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom."¹

All the pity and all the patience of Jesus came out in his reply. He will not suffer their mean ambition to be rebuked by the meaner jealousy of their brethren; but, gently reminding them of the cup of sorrow and the baptism of suffering, he seeks once more to lift them out of the sordidness of the flesh into the purity of the spirit, out of the greed of selfishness into the glory of sacrifice: "Who-soever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."²

He came to minister; and as he goes onward to meet his own cross, though the thronging multitudes would make his way a triumphal march, he is at the call of everybody's need, bearing everybody's cross, healing, comforting, minis-

¹ Matt. xx. 21.

² Matt. xx. 26-28.

REV. JOHN

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BLIND BARTIMEUS.

tering. He passes by none because they are poor, friendless, and unknown: all the more does he minister to such as cannot minister to him nor to themselves. Just without the gate of Jericho, two blind men are sitting by the wayside, begging alms of the passers-by. They hear the unwonted tumult, the tramp of a thousand feet, the shouting of a thousand voices, the crowds from the city hurrying out to meet the crowds from the fords of the river, — all eager to hear or see what Jesus may say or do. The sound draws nearer, grows more distinct; the quickened ears of the blind men hear that Jesus is passing by; and they cry, “Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David!” But crowds have no pity: every man is pushing for himself, wishes every thing for himself, and hates to have any thing come in the way of his seeing or getting whatever is to be seen or had; and so the multitude tell the blind men to be still, push them aside, angry that they will not hold their peace; but they cry and cry the more, till above all the tramping and the shouting rings that piercing wail, — “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us!” No man cares for them; no man offers to lead them. But Jesus stands still, and calls them. Springing up, they stagger forward, reaching out their arms to feel or make a way through the crowd, lifting up their sightless balls to where the voice of mercy is, “What will ye that I shall do unto you?” This Son of David, who might make himself king, puts himself

at their bidding, as the servant of all. "Lord, that our eyes may be opened," is the cry of their yet blind but earnest faith; and Jesus "has compassion on them, touches their eyes; and immediately their eyes receive sight." He, whom these bands of excited men would make their chief, shuts his ears to their huzzas, but hears the cry of human need, and stops to minister to blind, ragged beggars on the wayside.

A little farther on, near the town, a sycamore-tree spread its wide, thick branches across the way, just as one sees this same tree in Palestine before every village, by the fountain, or at a fork of the road. As Jesus passes under the tree, he looks up, and sees a man lodged in its branches, eagerly watching his approach. This man is no beggar, and he utters no cry. A tax-gatherer, he has made himself rich by serving the oppressors of his nation, and by cheating his countrymen. He is as much despised as any beggar, and is more to be pitied than the blind men who sit at the city gate for alms; for his soul is blind and beggared. He is "a publican and a sinner." But to-day his conscience is awake, and he feels the stirring of a new faith and life within him. Not ashamed to face the crowd who might hoot him down, in his eagerness to see Jesus, he climbs the tree, because he is little of stature. Jesus, ever ready to seize upon the first sign of penitence or faith, says to him, "Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy



ZACCHEUS.

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house." And now the fickle crowd are ready to murmur against their chief, because he will accept the hospitality of such a sinner; but "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." More precious than sight to the eye is salvation to the soul. The rich sinner repents, makes fourfold restoration, gives half of what remains to the poor, and rejoices that salvation has come to his house.

With these conspicuous examples of healing mercy and of saving grace as types of his mission, Jesus warns his followers that no such kingdom of God as they are looking for is about to appear; that he is to be taken from them, but they shall remain in trust as his servants; that faith is the key to position in his kingdom, and fidelity the key to its rewards. And so, with death distinctly before him, but scattering life along his way, "he goes before, ascending up to Jerusalem." From the heights of Bethany, Lazarus, Martha, and Mary watch far down the hill the coming of their friend and Lord, their hearts bounding with joy that they are so soon to welcome him; then sinking with dread, lest they should welcome him to danger, perhaps to death.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST.

SOMETIMES it is given to a man to be thought worthy of the highest places of honor and of power, to have his name coupled with distinctions that most men covet, to have these thrust upon him by the voice of the people ; and yet to show his greatness by declining office and fame, and giving himself to a simple, patient life of goodness. But it is in the nature of men, and especially in the fickle multitude, to resent the magnanimity that refuses to be honored in their way. Are not thrones, titles, riches, power, fame, the highest prizes the world has to bestow ? And is not the offer of these, the suggestion of them even, the highest compliment that men can render to one whom they admire and follow ? If, then, he cares nothing for these things, he wounds their pride ; and if he not only thrusts aside the honors they would force upon him, but at the same time tells them he has higher and better things to give than they have to offer, that they yet need to learn of him the first ideas of honor, riches, power, then he wounds also their

vanity, he turns their love to hate, their huzzas to hootings. When the people praise a leader, they flatter themselves in choosing him or in having him; they cover themselves with the odor of the incense that they burn to their idol; and they will soon dethrone an idol who will not regard their homage, nor accept their offerings, much more if he shall reprove his worshippers.

This trait of human nature is the key to the strange, sudden contrasts in the treatment of Jesus, that were crowded into the last six days of his life. It was the scene in the synagogue at Nazareth, repeated on the scale of the whole nation, and coming to the tragic end of which that had failed. It was the story of Capernaum over again, when, after he had fed five thousand from a few loaves and fishes, the people were ready to "take him by force, and make him a king;" but when he took himself away, and then came back and reproved them for seeking the loaves, and pointed to himself as the true bread of heaven, they demanded "a sign;" they sneered at him as Joseph's son; they turned back, and walked no more with him. It was the contrast of his whole life, accordingly as he seemed to meet or to thwart, the notions of the people as to what he was, or should become. A king they wanted, and a king must Jesus be.

On the morning after the arrival of Jesus at Bethany, the whole town was astir, and the road to Jerusalem was alive with people.

“ From every house the neighbors met;
The streets were filled with joyful sound;
A solemn gladness even crowned
The purple brows of Olivet.”

Though it was yet six days before the Passover, many caravans from the country had already arrived for the feast; and the crowd promised to be greater than usual, because everybody would be eager to see and hear the prophet who a few months before, at the festivals of the tabernacles and the dedication,¹ had done so many wonders, and had raised such a tumult that his life was in danger. At every new arrival the first question was, “Where is Jesus?” and, as he had not yet been seen in the temple, there was a lively discussion as to the chances of his coming at all. “What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?”

But, though he should not appear, Lazarus might be seen; and he was almost as great a wonder as Jesus himself. The caravans coming up from the Jordan halted by Bethany, to catch a sight of the man who had been raised from the dead. Crowds came over every day from Jerusalem for the same purpose; and it was evident that the people cared

¹ The Feast of Tabernacles occurred after all the fruits had been gathered in; corresponding with our October. The Feast of Dedication was in mid-winter; the Passover was in April or May, just before the first harvesting; the Pentecost in June, after the corn-harvest and before the vintage.

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JESUS LEAVING BETHANY.

more about the Nazarene and his doings than for all the scribes and doctors of the temple. This so enraged the chief priests that "they consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus."¹

As soon as it was known in Jerusalem that Jesus was at the house of Lazarus, the whole city poured out to meet him. Down the side of the temple-hill, across the bed of the Kedron, up the side of Olivet, swarmed the people, running, shouting, singing,—men, women, and children pressing on to Bethany. But on the way they met the surges of another crowd; for Jesus had already started for the city, with all Bethany, and the eastern caravans behind him. At this moment the disciples brought up an ass's colt; and, spreading their garments over its back, they seated Jesus upon it to lead him to Jerusalem in triumph. For now, at the last, Jesus would appear as the Messiah, the King of the Jews. He would show the people that they had not read the prophets in vain, had not looked in vain for a deliverer; he would fulfil in his own person the prediction of their scriptures, and would then fulfil in a far higher sense their own expectation of a Saviour. Yielding to their enthusiasm, seizing upon the time and the circumstances which would make his action most conspicuous, significant, and memorable, he would make a public entry into the capi-

¹ John xii. 9-11.

tal, like a prince going to be crowned; and by this *symbol* he would say to the daughter of Zion, "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass."¹ But in the very height of this popular enthusiasm, in this supreme moment of apparent royalty and victory, he would show the grandeur of his kingdom by refusing to use his power upon his enemies, by bearing only symbols of meekness and peace, and speaking only words of gentleness and sorrow.

There was nothing degrading in his riding upon an ass, which was a common beast of travel in Palestine. Abraham and Jacob had travelled in this way. In the time of the judges, the governors of Israel rode "on white asses," and the young princes had each an ass's colt.² It would not have been unbecoming for Jesus, even as a king, to have made his entry into Jerusalem upon such a beast, especially as the procession was extemporized and on foot; but he sent for the ass's colt, and rode it, as a sign of the simplicity and the peaceableness of his kingdom. He came not as the conqueror with worldly pomp and display, but as the Saviour, meek and lowly of heart. But the people would have him king, whether he would, or no.

The Orientals have a touch of fanaticism in their nature. These sedate, solemn-looking men, who move about so leisurely in their long robes and turbans, and seem too stupid

¹ Zech. ix. 9.

² Judg. v. 10, xii. 14.

for any excitement, can be worked up to a frenzy, especially when a strong religious impulse seizes on them. Then their loud outcries, their violent gestures, their noisy excesses of every sort, would make a Western crowd appear quite tame. So on this morning upon the Mount of Olives the multitudes gave loose to the wildest excitement, caused both by religious fervor and by political hopes. At last, at last! they had their Messiah. He had cast out devils, had raised the dead, and could do any thing. He was not afraid of the Pharisees; for, though he knew they were seeking his life, he was going openly to Jerusalem. And he was willing now to go as a king, to ride before the people, and let them honor and praise him. No doubt at Jerusalem he would do some wondrous sign. God was with him, and would help him; he would declare himself the Messiah, would take the throne of David; and the kingdom of God should immediately appear.¹ Fired with such feelings, wrought up to the highest pitch of enthusiasm for their nation and their religion now to be delivered, a great multitude ran before Jesus, and spread their garments in the way as a carpet for him to ride over. Others leaped up to the palm-trees that lined the road, and stripped them of their branches, and laid these in the way; and, as with one voice, the thousands upon thousands made the hills and woods ring with the shout, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that

¹ Luke xix. 11.

cometh in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

In vain did the Pharisees try to hush this cry; and, when they appealed to Jesus to rebuke his disciples, he answered, “I tell you, that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.” Yes, there he was, the King indeed! king of nature, king of the Jews, king of the world, king of life; and every thing was ready to serve him, and do him homage, — the brute creation, the trees of the field, the voices of children, the shouts of the people, — every thing save proud, envious, selfish human hearts.

Yet, that there were such hearts, moved him not to anger, but to infinite pity. Just as the Pharisees struck in their discord upon the hosannas of the people, Jesus turned that angle on the shoulder of Olivet, where the whole city burst upon the view, with indescribable splendor; temple, palaces, walls, towers, gates, gardens, the joy of the earth, lying at one’s feet. The view was familiar to Jesus; he had seen it as often as he had passed to and from Bethany. But now he halts to behold the city; and the multitude hush their cries, and crowd nearer to hear. From that point, a hundred years before, the Roman general Pompey, coming up from Jericho, had looked exultingly upon Jerusalem as his prize. On that point, thirty years later, the Roman general Titus planted a legion to guard the road to Jericho, and to



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batter the walls of the city and the temple. But no move of strategy, no thought of conquest, was in the mind of the Messiah-king as he stood rapt in the entrancing beauty of the view. His eyes filled with tenderness, they overflowed with tears; and, for the hosannas that had just now pealed about him, he broke out in the lamentation, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." Then, foreseeing the day when the Roman legions should stand where he stood, he added, "For the days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another: because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation."¹ No fiction could have invented such a scene. There is a story, that, after his victory at Chæroneia, Philip of Macedon burst into tears at the slaughter he had caused of the brave Thebans; and that Alexander the Great, on returning to Persepolis, wept when he looked upon the ruin he had brought upon that capital. But in both instances the conqueror was himself the agent of the destruction that he lamented; and his feeling was a not unnatural reaction, mixed perhaps with remorse. But when Jesus beheld the city, and wept over it, there was no

¹ Luke xix. 42-44.

visible cause of sorrow. The temple and the capital stood in their glory, never before so proudly beautiful. The Romans, indeed, were in possession; but the Jews had their homes and their religion free, and there were no signs of war in the sky. His sorrow could spring from no word or act of his own. His one thought for his countrymen had been to do them good; his one longing for the city was to save it. Refusing to disturb its peace by making himself king, refusing to turn the excitement of the populace to his own advantage, seeing already, in the background of the picture before him, his own cross lifted up, and the same people crying "Crucify him," he *wept*, not for himself and for his sorrows, but for Jerusalem, its sins and its woes. In this act Jesus stands alone in history; and by the very strength of his sympathy for a sinful, suffering race, he lifts himself so high above our human experiences that we are compelled to say these tears were none other than a divine compassion. We should never have understood their meaning, but for two events that show us what was in the mind of Jesus himself, — his own crucifixion, and the destruction of the city. Except for these, his weeping would have seemed a weakness or a mystery; for the emotion which Jesus showed in looking upon Jerusalem was altogether different from what any other man would have felt, or have thought of, at the moment when all the people were running after him, when the capital was wild with the

rumor that he was coming as its king, and the air was ringing with hosannas to his name. It is not in human nature in such circumstances not to feel a thrill of pride, of hope, or of joy, or some measure of self-complacency. But Jesus wept. It was not a city in ruins that he then looked upon; it was no present danger that so moved him: but to his prophetic eye were visible the days that in the next generation should come upon the capital,—the horrors of the siege, the army encompassing the city, the mounds heaped up for the assault, the famine and pestilence within the gates, the rush of soldiers trampling down the people, the burning of the temple, the razing of the walls and the houses even with the ground; and, as he foresaw this dreadful end, he wept that his blinded, infatuated, apostate countrymen would not suffer him to save them by bringing them back to God. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! *If* thou hadst known!”

Not one of the spectators, not one, even, of his own disciples, understood the meaning of those tears, of that lament. They had halted long enough to see and hear this strange outburst; but they were too eager to crown their king to heed the warning of the prophet; and taking up again the cry, “Hosanna,” the procession swept down the slope of Olivet, past the tombs of the prophets, across the bed of the Kedron, under the shadow of the temple walls, up the steep side of Moriah, swelling its numbers at every step, until, as

it passed through the eastern gate, "all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?" This is Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee; no longer a name of reproach: the good thing has come out of Nazareth. Hosanna, thy King cometh! With these swarming crowds, Jesus passed into the temple. The sick, the lame, the blind, were quick to hear that this man of wonders, this friend of the poor and the suffering, had come again; and from all parts of the town they hurried to the temple, or were carried there, and he healed them. These wonderful things that he did raised still higher the enthusiasm of the people; the courts and corridors rang with his praises; and, in the very cloisters where as a boy he had sat with the doctors, were children crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Again the angry priests and scribes broke in with their reproofs; but Jesus said to them, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise."

Soon after, leaving the temple, he withdrew from the excitements of the day, and went quietly back to Bethany to have an evening in his beloved home.

To-day one may follow in his steps, and, from the same spot where Jesus halted to look upon Jerusalem, may see the enchanting picture of the city; but it is no more the Jerusalem of the Jews. The Turk is master there; and upon the site of the temple stands the sacred mosque of the Moham-medans. There are no traces of the ancient building; but



CHILDREN CRYING HOSANNA.

a few old stones in a side wall mark its foundations; and there the pious Jews go every week to weep over the fall of their temple, and to pray for the coming of their Messiah. It is a sad and hopeless scene. O Jerusalem, if in *that* day thou hadst known the things of thy peace! Yet the very blindness and madness that brought on the destruction of city and temple gave to the world Calvary and its Saviour; and over that once sacred spot, now turned to wailing, meet the waves of song that roll around the redeemed world, Blessed is he that came in the name of the Lord!
HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST!

CHAPTER XXXII.

JESUS THE CHRIST.

By his public entry into Jerusalem, Jesus had signified that he was the Messiah. To his own disciples he had made himself fully known by his answer to Peter's confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."¹ And now, by accepting from the multitude the titles "Son of David" and "King of Israel," and refusing to rebuke them for these cries, he had allowed himself to be proclaimed before all Jerusalem as the Christ. As King of Israel, as the Christ of prophecy, he had entered the city of David, the house of the Lord; he had preached his gospel, and finished his work: but his kingdom was not of this world; and, with his character and mission thus clearly unveiled, he was now ready to die. His entry took place on Monday, amid the hosannas of the people; and, before noon of Friday, he was hung up on the cross, amid the jeers of the mob. Never was so much compressed into one human life, as in these last days of the life of Jesus, — so much of truth, of testimony,

¹ Matt. xvi. 16.

of warning to all who had ears to hear ; so much of counsel and of sympathy in the intimacy of friends ; so much of compassion and of help for the needy ; so much of pity and of promise for his disciples ; so much of love for enemies, and of sacrifice for all ; so much of loneliness and of desertion from man and God ; so much of agony and shame in suffering, and of majesty and triumph in death.

Spending his nights at Bethany, he went every morning over the Mount of Olives to the city, and gave the day to the temple, preaching to the people, whose number increased as the Passover drew near, and whose excitement grew more and more intense under his stern and burning words. For the ministry that opened with benedictions and entreaties closed with rebukes and threatenings. His first miracle used his power over nature to further a social festival, — a miracle of creation, to cheer and bless : his last miracle used his power over nature for a symbol of the favored but fated people in whom his ministry had come to no fruit, — a miracle of destruction, withering the barren fig-tree from the roots.

This parable in action was followed by a series of parables, in which the central thought is always the rejection of himself and his grace by the Jews, and their rejection in turn by his Father, through the overthrow of their city, their temple, and their nation, and in the severer judgments of the last great day. In these parables, the Jewish people,

with their national pride and their religious formalism, are compared to the son who was full of promises, but never did his father's will; and are told that the lowest of the heathen who repent of sin "shall go into the kingdom of God before them."¹ They are compared to husbandmen, who, being in charge of the choicest vineyard, killed the heir, and were themselves destroyed by the lord of the vineyard;² they are compared to favored guests invited to the marriage of the king's son, who not only refuse to come, but stir up insurrection against the king, and compel him to discard and punish them, while the wedding is furnished with guests from the beggars of the highways.³ These parables cut at the root of their national pride and of their self-righteousness, and turn their very hopes of the Messiah as king into so many accusations for rejecting the Messiah as Saviour. Such preaching must have one of two effects: either it must open their eyes, humble their hearts, bring them to confess their error, and turn from their sins; or it must stiffen their pride, rouse their national jealousy, and stir up hatred against their reprover.

But more decisive than this faithful dealing with the people was the boldness with which Jesus denounced the scribes and Pharisees. At first they tried to suppress his teaching, demanding, "By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee that authority?"⁴ But Jesus

¹ Matt. xxi. 28-32.

² Matt. xxi. 33-41.

³ Matt. xxii. 1-10.

⁴ Matt. xxi. 23.

baffled them by insisting that they should first tell him whether the baptism of John was from heaven, or of men. They could not say "From heaven;" for Jesus would ask, "Why, then, did ye not believe him?" They could not say, "Of men;" for they feared the people, who held John as a prophet. So Jesus refused to give his authority. His works and his words were authority enough; and he silenced them.

Defeated on this side, the scribes and Pharisees tried "to catch him in his talk." In their eagerness to make out a case against him, the parties who were commonly quarrelling with each other came together, and agreed upon a plan of attack. First came the Herodians,¹ of a political party who held that it was best to keep peace with the Romans by owning their authority, and yielding to their demands. These asked him, "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?" If Jesus had said "No," the Herodians would have denounced him to the Roman governor as preaching up sedition; but, if he had said "Yes," the Pharisees would have

¹ The Herodians were so called from King Herod the Great. The strict Jews held that no one had a right to rule over them who was not a Jew by birth and in religion. Now, Herod was by birth an Idumæan, and at heart was more a Pagan than a Jew; but he had made himself master of Judea, and by courting favor at Rome had obtained the title of king. In this state of things, some leading Jews were disposed to separate government from religion, and to support Herod's authority and the Roman emperor, for the sake of worldly advantages. Even for a long time after the death of Herod, such Jews were called *Herodians*.

stirred up the people against him as willing to surrender the Jewish nation to its enemies. Calling for a penny, Jesus showed them, that, by using money stamped with the head of the emperor, they acknowledged his authority; but at the same time he upheld the authority of Jehovah, saying, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."¹ So these crafty politicians were put down.

Next the Sadducees,² who held that there is no resurrection, tried to catch him by supposing the case of a woman who had been married seven times, and asking whose wife she should be in the resurrection. But Jesus answered, "When they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels which are in heaven;" and then he showed how their own Scriptures assume a life after death, and speak of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as still living with God. So the sceptical Sadducees were put down; and both the common people and scribes who were standing by took sides with Jesus.

At last one of the ablest scribes,³ or lawyers, was moved

¹ Mark xii. 13-17.

² The *Sadducees* were a school or sect of reformers and freethinkers that arose about two hundred years before Christ, as the followers of a famous teacher named *Zadok*. They began with trying to purify the national religion, by opposing many traditions and ceremonies; but they ended in rejecting some of the chief doctrines, such as the providence of God, the existence of the soul, and the life after death.

³ There had always been, among the Levites, men whose special



JOSEPH DURAND.

"RENDER UNTO CÆSAR THE THINGS THAT ARE CÆSAR'S."

to ask him, "Which is the great commandment of the law?" The teachers of the law were constantly disputing on this point; some insisting upon sacrifices as of the first importance, others upon tithes or ceremonies. But Jesus could not be drawn into such controversies; and his answer took hold so deeply upon the reason, the heart, and the conscience, upon the very nature of God, of men, and religion, that "no man after that durst ask him any question." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely, this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."¹

Jesus now turned the tables upon his enemies; and, as the Pharisees² were gathered around him, he asked them a studies in the sacred law gained for them the title of "the learned." But, in the time of Ezra, a school was formed for training such students; and these gradually rose into an order of teachers, who were looked up to by the people as an authority upon questions of doctrine and of practice. The scribes made commentaries upon the law; and by degrees they came to be divided among themselves, and, like schools of theology nowadays, to dispute about the meaning or the importance of the doctrines which they derived from their sacred scriptures.

¹ Mark xii. 28-34.

² The *Pharisees* might be called the *Ritualists* of their day. In the third century before Christ, there was, among the Jews, a revival of that old spirit of piety that had kept them separate from other nations. as the special people of God. This devout feeling, a certain party sought to perpetuate by making piety consist in a strict observance of the letter

question that put them to confusion before the people: "What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?" They answered at once, "The son of David." — "How, then," said Jesus, "doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool?" The Jews regarded the One Hundred and Tenth Psalm as a prophecy of the Messiah. He is there pictured as a king subduing kings and nations, and the hosts of whose followers are as multiplied, as fresh, and as brilliant as the dew of the morning. At the same time he is a priest, yet not of a changeable human priesthood, but "a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek," who stands forth alone in his royal and priestly dignity, with no mention of his birth or his death, of ancestors or successors; the type of an eternal priesthood. But the Psalmist pictures his royal priest, his consecrated Lord, as sitting at the right hand of God, and sharing the power and dignity of the Most High; and since the Jews were so jealous for the name of Jehovah that they made it blasphemy, — a sin punished by death, — to give to a man the titles, the place, the honor, of God, therefore David in calling Christ his Lord, and seating him upon the throne of the law, as to the forms of worship, sacrifices, prayers, alms, &c.; but what at first was a real spirit of religious fervor came to be with many a mere formalism, an outward show. Jesus did not hesitate to call the Pharisees hypocrites, for making so much show of religion when they had so little of its spirit.

Jehovah, made him the Son of God, the sharer of divine majesty and glory. Far, far above the earthly throne of David was the Christ before whom David bowed in homage as his Lord. This divine sonship did Jesus tacitly claim for himself in his question to the Pharisees ; and “no man was able to answer him a word ;”¹ but “the common people heard him gladly.”² He now openly spoke of himself to his disciples as the Christ : “one is your Master, even Christ ;”³ and, after his explanation of the prophecies concerning Christ, there can be no doubt of his meaning that he, the Son of man, was the Son of God. It was God his Father who had sent him into the world, who had commanded him what he should speak,⁴ and who always heard his prayer.

Standing forth now as the Christ, in the audience of all the people, he uttered warnings against the scribes and Pharisees, their pride, their greed, their vanity, their oppression, their hypocrisy. Then he denounced them to their faces as hypocrites, “which devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayers, and who shut up the kingdom of heaven against men ; as blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel ; as whited sepulchres, that outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.” He charges them with the blood of the prophets, with the purpose of persecuting and killing his disciples, and warns them of the “damnation”

¹ Matt. xxii. 46. ² Mark xii. 37. ³ Matt. xxiii. 9. ⁴ John xii. 49.

that shall come upon them. Yet, in all these terrible accusations and warnings, there was nothing of personal bitterness, nothing of resentment for their treatment of himself. For after these searching, burning words comes again the lamentation, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"¹ The crisis was approaching; it must come. If such preaching shut up the people either to confessing Jesus as the Saviour sent from God, or to rejecting him as the disturber of their peace, it drove the Pharisees to a fiercer determination to get rid of him altogether. It was plain that he or they must go down. How could they hope for respect for their authority and teachings, if they suffered him to denounce them as blind, false, selfish, cruel, a "generation of vipers"?² Every day they were plotting how to put him out of the way. Jesus knew their purpose, was prepared for it, and now began to prepare his disciples for the end which was just at hand.

Two of the twelve, Andrew and Philip, told him that some Greeks who had embraced the Jewish faith were anxious to see him. At this late day his disciples were still Jews to their hearts' core, looked upon their Master as the Saviour and King of Israel, and could hardly think it proper

¹ Matt. xxiii. 37-38.

² Matt. xxiii. 33.

to present to him men of a foreign race, who were born Pagans, and now were only proselytes. But to the mind of Jesus the desire of these Greeks to see him foreshadowed the coming of the whole Gentile world to his kingdom. This could not be, however, so long as he remained in the body, and as a Jew, known only to his countrymen, and followed only by a few of them. To bring the world to him, he must first give his life for the world. Rejected by the Jews, and hung upon the cross, the meaning of his life and work would then be known and read of all men, and the Son of man should indeed be glorified. Before the life that was in him could exert its quickening, saving power, it must be set free from the earthly shell that surrounded it. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone; but, if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."¹ So said Jesus, now that he was called once more to choose between the worldly popularity that might lift him to a throne, and the self-sacrifice that should bring him a spiritual seed. To save his life by serving the whim of the people, would be to throw away his life as a power of good. To hate even the thought of saving his life by abandoning his work, to sacrifice his life to his work, would be to keep his name and work forever alive in the hearts and the lives

¹ John xii. 24, 25.

of men. With this high devotion to truth and God, he calls upon his servants to follow him even to death; then, rising into the sublime consciousness that he is the Son of God, he adds, "Where I am, there shall also my servant be. If any man serve me, him will my Father honor."¹ He does not hesitate to say that heaven is for him and his followers, and to pledge the Father to honor those who serve Jesus as serving God himself.

But this vision of spiritual and heavenly glory does not lift him above the weakness of his human nature. The very refinement and spirituality of his feelings render the nerves of his body the more keenly sensitive to pain. The finest, noblest natures suffer most. And the shrinking of his nervous organism from the anguish of the cross causes him to exclaim, "Now is my soul troubled." The old conflict of the wilderness between the flesh and the spirit is renewed; and, "What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour:" so pleads the *man* within him, the human, that shrinks from torture and death. "But for this cause came I to this hour;" my whole life has been shaped toward this end; "Father, glorify thy name:" so answers the *Christ* within him, the Son of God, to his Father's will.²

A sound breaks from the clear heaven. The people startled say, some, "It thundered;" others, "An angel spake to him;"³ but to his quickened ears it was a voice from

¹ John xii. 26.² John xii. 27.³ John xii. 29.

heaven, saying, "I have glorified my name, and will glorify it again."¹ The Christ now rises to his throne, and takes the dominion of the world. "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me,"² — victory and dominion through the cross. He declares himself the light of the world; he identifies himself with God. "He that seeth me seeth him that sent me." But in all this there is no fanaticism. He feels the ground he stands upon. It is a great and serene soul speaking from the inmost depths of truth. His late severity vanishes; the deep undertone of compassion is heard once more: "If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him. The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day."³ Man is bound to obey the truth. Wherever he disregards truth, or swerves from it, in physics, in morals, in society, he must suffer the penalty in the very laws of his being. Truth is certain; truth is unchanging; truth is living; truth is eternal. We can never get rid of a truth that we have once known. The fact of meeting it brings the obligation to regard it. And if Jesus spake not of himself, but spake the truth of God, then his word must guide and save

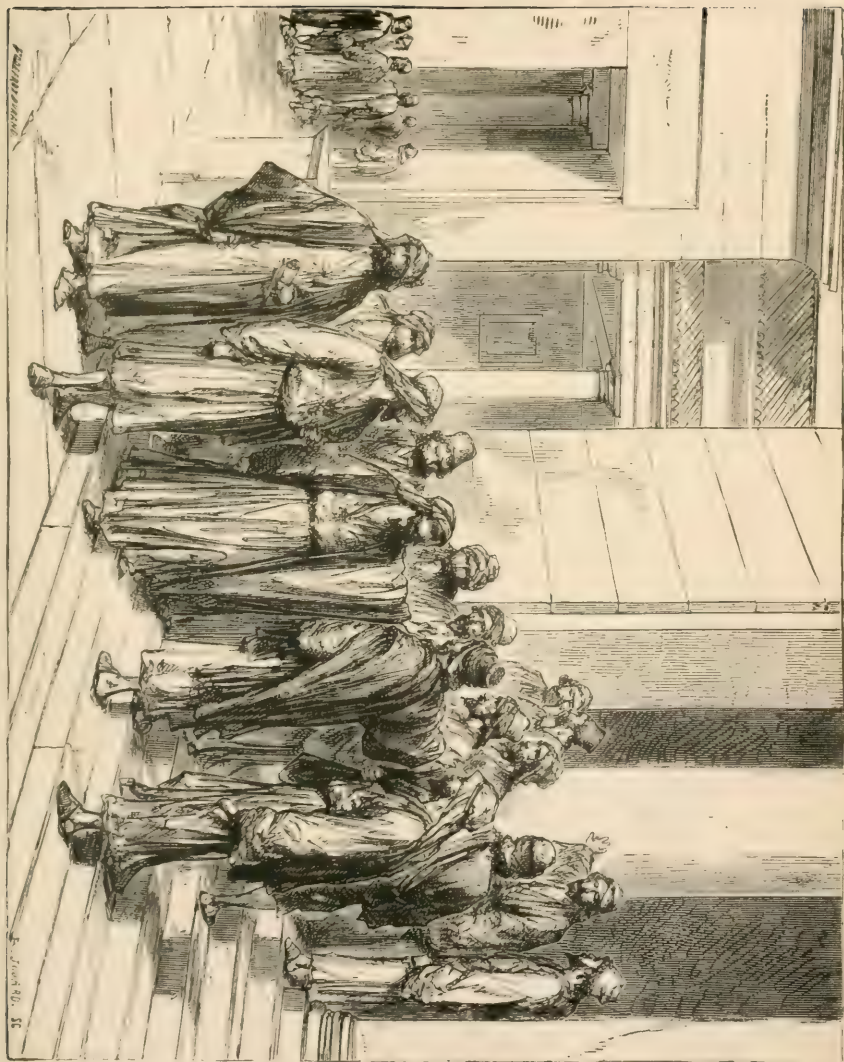
¹ John xii. 28.² John xii. 31, 32.³ John xii. 47, 48.

the soul, or will judge and condemn it. Leaving his word as light and judge, Jesus closed his public ministry, and went out, and departed from the temple.

As they were leaving, his disciples called his attention to the size and splendor of the buildings; to which Jesus answered, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down."¹ They were on their way to Bethany; and, when they reached the summit of the Mount of Olives, they sat down to rest, with the city lying at their feet. The discourses and parables of Jesus in the temple had impressed the disciples with an unwonted awe. His terrible warnings and denunciations were now uppermost in their thoughts; and, supposing the day of judgment to be at hand, they came to the Master saying, "Tell us when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"² Jesus gave them in outline a panorama of events that should follow his crucifixion until the destruction of Jerusalem,—wars, commotions, famines, pestilences, earthquakes in divers places, fearful sights, and great signs from heaven. They themselves should be persecuted, imprisoned, some of them put to death. At last Jerusalem should be compassed with armies; its inhabitants should fall by the edge of the sword, or be led away captive, and the city trodden down of the Gentiles. As this destruction would come suddenly, the

¹ Matt. xxiv. 1, 2.

² Matt. xxiv. 3.



"THERE SHALL NOT BE LEFT ONE STONE UPON ANOTHER."



disciples should take heed, watch, and pray, that they may flee in season. Like wise virgins, they must have their lamps filled and trimmed; like faithful servants, must be ready to account for their talents. Three days before, from that very spot Jesus had wept over the doomed city; now he has only to warn his disciples to escape its fate. Then he rode into the city as Christ the King; now he sits above it as Christ the Sovereign and the Judge. There is something terrible in the majesty that here invests this meek and patient man, this loving and suffering Saviour. He came to his own, and his own received him not. Henceforth men can be divided into but two classes: they who receive him, and they who reject him,—his friends, and his enemies. And such also shall be the separation of the world at the last great day. As Christ is the central point of human history, the dividing and decisive test of human character, so shall he be the central figure in the judgment, the point of separation for eternity. “When the Son of man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on the left;” and the test by which they shall be divided is their treatment of himself in the persons of the poor, the sick, the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the stranger, the prisoner.

And so through all the majesty of Christ the Judge still beams the mercy of Jesus the Saviour.¹

At that very time the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people, were in conclave at the palace of Caiaphas the high priest, contriving how they might take Jesus by craft, and put him to death, without causing an uproar among the people. Jesus and the disciples went on to Bethany for the night, the last night he should spend there. Forgetting his dangers and sorrows, he was once more the guest among friends. It was at this supper that Mary filled the house with the odor of the ointment that she poured over his feet. "She is come beforehand," said Jesus, "to anoint my body for the burying."² And Judas Iscariot, who had sneered at the waste, slunk away from that scene of love, and went and sold himself for thirty pieces of silver, to betray his Lord to the chief priests in the absence of the multitude.

¹ Matt. xxv.

² Mark xiv. 1-9.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE LAST SUPPER.

It was now Thursday, which was "the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover."¹ By noon of that day all labor would cease, and all leaven would be put away; before sundown the paschal lamb would be killed; and after sunset, which by the Jews' reckoning was the beginning of Friday, the lamb would be eaten with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. It was a great point, with Jews from the country, to eat the Passover within the gates of Jerusalem; and people who had houses in the city did their utmost to provide accommodations for guests, even though these were not relatives or friends. Early on Thursday morning, Jesus sent Peter and John over from Bethany to make arrangements for the Passover at the house of a friend in the city, who had a large upper room furnished and prepared.² Toward evening Jesus went over to Jerusalem with the rest of the disciples.³

At the first the Passover was a family feast. Every

¹ Mark xiv. 12.

² Luke xxii. 8-13.

³ Mark xiv. 16, 17.

family had its own lamb; or, where families were too small to provide and use an entire lamb, two or three neighbors were allowed to join together in the feast. At first, too, every lamb was killed at home, and its blood was sprinkled on the lintels and doorposts of the house. But at this time it was quite usual for men alone to observe the supper, coming together in companies of twenty or more without regard to family connections; though women were not excluded if they wished to partake of the lamb. The lamb was killed at the temple, where its blood was sprinkled on the altar; then it was taken home to be roasted whole, care being taken that not a bone should be broken.¹

The twelve disciples of Jesus were to him as a family. For three years they had hardly been separated from him, except when sent upon preaching-tours; and in the last few months they had been with him in all his journeys. Now in these last days, the thicker the shadows of death gathered around him, the closer did Jesus cling to his disciples. There was, indeed, little in them to lean upon,—in fact, nothing of what this world reckons a support. Position, wealth, influence, power, learning—these they had not. Capacity for great ideas and great undertakings they had not shown. They had failed to understand their Master's teachings, or to take hold of the true idea of his mission and work. But, with one exception, he knew them to be

¹ Exod. xii. 46.

true ; and the very simplicity of their devotion, based as this was upon strong common-sense, recommended them to him as men to be chosen and trusted. Under all their mistakes and weaknesses, were the elements of a strong, true character ; and, as the end drew near, Jesus confided to them his inmost thoughts and feelings, his purposes and hopes, until at last he shared with them the sacred intimacy of his soul with God : “Henceforth I call you not servants ; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth : but I have called you friends ; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”¹ It was with these feelings that he gathered the twelve around him as his own family at the paschal feast ; his last hours upon earth he would spend in the sacred privacy of friendship. Very significant is the language in which John describes this : “When Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.”² These words, and the acts that go along with them, show the heart of Jesus in its human tenderness, and the mind of Jesus in its divine wisdom. How tenderly human to love on more and more to the end ! how divinely wise to use the profoundest feelings of human nature for the furtherance of a kingdom which could prosper only in and through the hearts of men !

¹ John xv. 15.

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² John xiii. 1.

Among the most powerful agencies in human action are the social instinct, elective affinity, or the class instinct, corporate unity, and memorial expression. These instincts, tendencies, attributes, — term them what we will, — are undying properties of human nature; and Jesus showed his marvellous wisdom as a reformer, in that he did not run counter to these in his arrangements for his church, but utilized them all in subjection to, and in harmony with, his great ideas of love and of holiness. By his doctrines of the worth of the soul, and of the personal relations of man with God, he gave to man, as man, a position far higher than any philosophy or religion of antiquity had given him, and higher even than modern science and modern democracy have yet attained; but he never proposed to set up each man for himself as his own chief end and good, living like a mystic in some hidden personal relation with God. On the contrary, his doctrine of the worth of the individual ran into the doctrine of brotherhood. As, in respect to common wants and helps, every man is a neighbor, so, in respect to spiritual wants and hopes, every man is a brother. “One is your Father which is in heaven; and one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.” Instead of crucifying the social instinct through spiritual pride, Jesus sought to ennoble this instinct, and bring it to perfection in Christian communion and brotherhood.

But, on the other hand, he did not run this idea of brother-

hood into communism: his doctrine of liberty, equality, fraternity, was not that of a community of goods, of "share and share alike" in all places of honor and authority, in all possessions of talent or property. While he taught that all are children of one Father, that souls are of equal value before God, and that it is the duty of every one to love his neighbor as himself, to desire the good of others, and seek to promote this as he would his own, he also taught the liberty of every man to choose his associates, and to fraternize with his own circle of friends. From among all his disciples and followers, "he chose twelve that they should be with him." These twelve he kept about him as his companions; he told them many things that he did not tell to others; he "loved them to the end;" he brought these twelve together by themselves to share with him his last supper; he spoke to them the most tender, endearing words, repeating, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."¹ Here was the principle of selection, of adoption, of preference, though all other disciples were alike the objects of the Master's love.

But Jesus carried this selection still further; and, among these twelve who were chosen from the rest, he had favorites and confidants. At the raising of Jairus's daughter, he left all the disciples outside of the house save Peter, James, and John. These three he took with the father and the

¹ John xv. 16.

mother of the maiden into the room where she lay dead. Again, when he went up into the mountain to be transfigured, he took with him only Peter, James, and John ; and, on coming down, he made them promise not to tell their brother disciples what they had seen, till he should have risen from the dead. He sent Peter and John to Jerusalem to prepare the Passover ; and at the last, when he went to Gethsemane, he left the body of the disciples near the entrance of the garden, and took Peter, James, and John within, desiring that the three who had seen him in his glory should be near him in his agony ; always these three, and only these three. Here was an elective affinity shown by Jesus within the little circle of his chosen disciples ; a choice within a choice. And he carried his personal preference still further ; within this little inner circle of loved companionship, he had yet a nearer love, a choice among the three. Peter he took in confidence in matters of energy and prominence, — built upon him as a rock ; but John he took to be nearest his heart. He was known among the brotherhood as “ the disciple whom Jesus loved ; ” at the supper he was “ lying on Jesus’ breast ; ” he was the only one who stood by the Lord through all the last scenes ; and from the cross, “ when Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he said unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son ; and, to the disciple, Behold thy mother.”¹ From

¹ John xix. 26, 27.

all his followers, he singled out one for the most tender, sacred offices of human affection and of Christian fidelity. The love of Jesus did not waste itself in a vague sentiment over humanity; but while it was broad enough and deep enough to take in the whole human family in all nations and all generations, a love for men that would save the world, at the same time it sought out the individual and the particular. The wide-flowing stream had its sunny isles, its quiet nooks, its rippling eddies, for childhood, for home, for friendship, for chosen company. Jesus would root out all selfish loves; he would realize the brotherhood of humanity, would institute a world-wide charity, would swallow up pride, bigotry, jealousy, hatred, war, revenge, in the love of our neighbor. But he did not attempt to suppress those instincts that God has planted in our nature, that point us to the family, to friendship, to some sacred union of personal choice, as a motive and a means to our highest welfare. He did not seek to reform and save society by destroying the very sentiments and properties in the nature of man that fit him to be a social being. He used these same elements of power for building up his own kingdom of love. In this Jesus showed himself the greatest of social philosophers, the wisest of reformers. If we follow his example, we shall love and seek the good of all men, shall have no personal aims nor ends against the welfare of others; but we may have our chosen circle of companions, our private set of confidants, our bosom friend.

In using the principle of elective affinity, Jesus went still further in the direction of the class instinct. The French convention of 1793 put forth, as the highest law of human society, the maxim that the "liberty of each citizen ends where the liberty of another citizen begins." This was the last outcome of those "saviours of society" in the eighteenth century, who led the revolution, the throes of which Europe still feels. Much as they did for humanity, they left to France a century of vibration between anarchy and despotism. To carry out their theory of liberty, they set aside every order, distinction, class, privilege, that had before existed in Church or State, and sought to produce a dead level of citizenship. These leaders were, for the most part, haters of Christianity. Now, Jesus, as a reformer of society, was also a leveller: his doctrine was for man, against all the barriers of caste, of nation, of race; and for the common people, against the scribes and Pharisees. But where the liberty of another *begins* he makes our *duty* also begin, to seek his best good. Yet, at the same time, he created an order, an aristocracy, which in its claims is more lofty, and in its conditions more absolute and select, than any that ever existed on the face of the earth. This class, divided from all the rest of mankind by a new birth and a holy character, are known as the elect of God, his children, the heirs of heaven; they, and they alone, are in the kingdom of God on earth; they, and they alone, shall possess heaven hereafter.

Between them and all others, the separation here is as wide as holiness from sin; and hereafter there will be a "great gulf fixed." Never was so high, so sweeping, so lasting a claim as this, set up on behalf of any order of men; an aristocracy of heaven established on earth. But this order, or society, has these three peculiarities,—first, that it is spiritual in its tokens and its rewards; second, that any one can enter it by changing his life and character to conform to its conditions; and, third, that, once within its pale, all its members are equal. The most towering aristocracy from without, it is the most level democracy within. By its spiritual nature it can go anywhere, among all people, in all lands. By its superior claims it sweeps away all earthly distinctions,—thrones, dominions, principalities, powers,—as things of nought. By its free spirit it attracts every one who wishes to become all that it is possible to be in character. Jesus thus appeals to one of the strongest of human instincts,—the desire to *rise*,—and by the purest and noblest ambition leads on the perfection of humanity. It matters not how low one is in birth or station, how poor in means and qualities: "to as many as receive him, he gives power to become the sons of God; which are born not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

The social instinct and the elective attraction, so powerful in human nature, find expression in various modes of corporate unity; and this tendency to society in action, as well as

in feeling, Jesus took advantage of in forming his church. But in this, as in every thing, he refined upon a human quality, and gave it the highest spiritual impulse and direction. For the unity which he established was not one of modes and forms, but of faith and love. The supper that he commanded his disciples to observe, and the rules he gave for offending brethren, imply and require some kind of association; but the sign of Christian fellowship should be "that ye love one another;" and the unity of the Church, a spiritual accord through union in Christ and with the Father; "as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; that the world may know that thou hast sent me." There can be no body of Christ except where there is the spirit of Christ. The union of believers with Christ is so near and full that it is described as a participation of his very life; "I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." Here is the law of union, or incorporation, in its highest form: not mere outward association, but inner unity; not creeds and modes, but life and fruit.

Yet there is one outward token of this inward unity that Jesus himself appointed, — the communion of saints; and, in so doing, he took advantage of the fondness there is in man for memorials. By the memorial supper, he would

gather his disciples around his table in remembrance of himself. The form of this remembrance is so simple that it can be everywhere observed. Had he required a pilgrimage to his tomb, or proposed a memorial at Jerusalem, the great body of mankind must have been cut off from any share in it. But this memorial, in the simplicity of its form, is universal. Yet, while the most simple, it is at the same time the most striking of memorials.

The thoughts thus far gathered from the scene of the last supper are all from the human side, showing the wisdom of Jesus as a reformer, in using for high spiritual ends the broad, deep, underlying, universal instincts and tendencies of human nature. But, in this last hour with his disciples, we see him not only as teacher and reformer, but as Saviour. Not truths mainly, but a life ; and not the life in itself, but his life as interpreted by his death, — is what is set forth to be remembered in the Lord's Supper. It is common with us to observe the birthdays, not the death-days, of those we love ; and when death has been connected with an act of violence, or some special sadness, we shrink from recalling the details. A friend gave me, as a sacred memorial, a scrap of the lining of the box in which Mr. Lincoln was sitting at the moment when the bullet of the assassin made him a martyr. The fragment is stained with his blood ; but I keep it hidden out of sight, and prize infinitely more the staff he was accustomed to use, sent me as a keepsake,

the signature of his hand to a measure of peace and goodwill, and the picture of himself as reading the proclamation of emancipation. It is the living man, his face, his form, his words, his deeds, we love to commemorate. But Jesus arranged, that, to the end of time, his followers should commemorate his death; and not only so, but the very manner of his death, — that they should break the bread to remind them how his body was broken, that they should drink the cup to remind them how his blood was shed. And it has come to pass, that what we should shrink from in itself — the symbol of *blood* — has become the most sacred memorial observed by men. To see why this is so, we must go deeper into the meaning of the supper, as explained by the talk and the prayer of Jesus at the time, and by what took place directly afterwards in Gethsemane and on Calvary.

When John the Baptist first pointed out Jesus to his disciples, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”¹ In his discourse in the synagogue at Capernaum, Jesus said, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life.”² Now, all these say-

¹ John i. 29.

² John vi. 51-53.



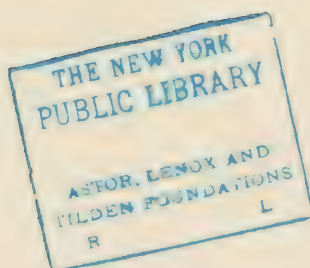
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ings were explained by the paschal meal, of which Jesus then partook for the last time, and by the memorial supper which he appointed at the same time. The whole evening was pervaded with the thought of his going away; the shadow of death was in the chamber. When the meal was ready, the lamb was placed upon a little table in the centre, with bread and wine; and around this in a circle was a row of cushions, or couches, upon which the guests reclined while eating. Thus the face of each guest was toward the table, and his feet were stretched outwards behind the cushion on which he leaned.

This custom made it easy for Mary, at the supper in Bethany, to slip behind Jesus as he reclined at the table, and to anoint his feet. At the Lord's Supper there were no servants. All ate from a common dish, or there was a dish for every group of three or four; and each guest took his portion with his fingers or with a piece of bread. Sometimes one would hand to another a morsel from the dish. So Judas dipped his hand into the same dish with Jesus; and afterwards Jesus dipped a sop, and gave it to him. As Jesus was reclining upon one hand, according to the custom, and eating with the other, John, whose cushion was next his, reclining from the other side could lean his head upon Jesus' bosom. Thus they sat around the lamb whose blood had been sprinkled on the altar as a token of the safety and deliverance of the people of God. And here was

the Lamb of God, whose blood should be shed for the sin of the world. Jesus said unto them, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer. For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." The offering of a lamb as a type of redemption should cease when the redemption itself unto the kingdom of God should be perfected through his own suffering. In token of this, he now renewed their appointment as his apostles, saying, "He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." And, again, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations; and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me." But for the last time to repress the elation of a worldly ambition, and to purge their eyes of all earthly vanities, he gave them the most touching lesson of humility ever put by a master to his disciples. "He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself. After that, he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well, for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."¹ Next came that

¹ John xiii. 1-17.





"ONE OF YOU SHALL BETRAY ME."

moment of terrible suspense when Jesus said, "One of you which eateth with me shall betray me;"¹ and even Judas, stunned by this revelation of his crime, sought to hide himself by asking, "Master, is it I?" Under show of buying something for the feast, or giving to the poor, Judas now slipped away just after the paschal meal was ended. Jesus went on to tell the rest how near was the hour of his suffering. "All ye shall be offended because of me this night; for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." He warns the over-confident Peter that he shall deny him thrice. The scene is fast converging to a tragedy, too painfully earnest, too intensely solemn, for human endurance. After three years of such intimacy as Jesus has had with his disciples, he is to die by violence; one of them shall betray him, all shall desert him, and the very boldest shall deny him. But in the midst of all Jesus is calm: more than this; he is full of tenderness and pity for his disciples, full of counsel and of consolation. Taking the bread, and blessing it, he gives it to them, saying, "Take, eat: this is my body." Afterward, taking the cup, he gives thanks, and passes it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." As the blood of the lamb had ratified the old covenant of the Passover, so should his blood, the blood of the Lamb of

¹ John xiii. 21.

God, ratify the new covenant to be commemorated by the Lord's Supper. And, while the disciples listen in silent wonder, Jesus goes on to say, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." But why or how should he lay down his life for them? Had they all been prisoners, or proscribed, he might have volunteered to ransom them by yielding up his life. But the disciples were in no personal danger, if only Jesus would take himself out of the way. For their safety it was not at all necessary that he should die. He had only to quit the country, or to go and live quietly in Galilee, and no one would molest these poor, unknown disciples. There was no earthly benefit that he could secure to them by laying down his life for them. Why, then, should he, against their tears and entreaties, insist upon dying, and make this the supreme token of his love? Ah, this is not alone the Master about to become the martyr. Something more than human speaks in Jesus, of something more than common dying. He unveils his higher nature. "I am the way and the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me. He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it." He is going away, but he will come again; he shall die, but he will rise from the dead. Afterward he will return to his Father; then he will send the Comforter, the Spirit of truth. He himself has overcome the world, and even in the agony

of death he shall overcome the prince of this world: therefore his disciples should not be troubled, but be of good cheer. He goes to prepare a place for them in his Father's house. They shall pray to him, and shall pray to the Father in his name. Then he himself prays for them, speaking to God as closely, as tenderly, as confidently, as a son to his father. He has nothing to ask for himself. He has eternal life to bestow. In this supreme gift he associates himself with God. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." He is in God, and God in him. "No more in the world," he plants himself serenely upon the love with which the Father loved him before the foundation of the world, and says, "O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

What manner of person is he who on the eve of death so acts, so speaks, so prays? Was Jesus an enthusiast, a visionary? But in vain do we look for enthusiasm in his teachings, his actions, his life; and in these last moments there is a sustained dignity, an ineffable calmness, a divine consciousness, that breathes over the whole scene his own peace. Never had there been such a parting. As we sit in that upper chamber, we feel around us such majesty, such truth, such holiness, such love, that we would fain anticipate the cry of the centurion at the cross, "Truly this was

the Son of God.” This was the fitting sequel of such a life as we have traced in these pages, the rounding-up of such a character. We linger silently, tenderly, adoringly, in that upper chamber: Jesus the Saviour is there. We go back again and again to hear those last precious promises, and to feel the loving embrace of that last prayer: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one.” We feel that there was the turning-point of our humanity, — his sacrifice and our redemption. This do in remembrance of Thee! Ah, what could ever cause us to forget thee? All Christendom, humanity itself, has become the memorial of Jesus. “The world itself is changed, and is no more the same that it was; it has never been the same since Jesus left it. The air is charged with heavenly odors; and a kind of celestial consciousness, a sense of other worlds, is wafted on us in its breath. It were easier to untwist all the beams of light in the sky, separating and expunging one of the colors, than to get the character of Jesus, which is the real gospel, out of the world. Look ye hither, all ye blinded and fallen of mankind: a better nature is among you; a pure heart out of some pure world is come into your prison, and walks it with you. Do you require of us to show who he is, and definitely to expound his person? We may not be able. Enough to know that he is not of us, — some strange being out of nature, and above it, whose

name is Wonderful. Enough that sin has never touched his hallowed nature, and that he is a friend. In him dawns a hope, — purity has not come into our world except to purify. Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world! Light breaks in; peace settles on the air. Lo, the prison walls are giving way! Rise, let us go!”¹

¹ Bushnell: *Nature and the Supernatural*, pp. 331, 332.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

GETHSEMANE.

THE moon was shining brightly as Jesus and the eleven disciples (for one had deserted their little band) went out at the eastern gate of the city, and took the winding path down to the Kedron, as if to follow the familiar way to Bethany. The friend who had provided them a room for the supper could not accommodate them for the night, and none of them had homes in Jerusalem ; it was late for going to Bethany ; but they might sleep in some of the camps around the city, or, at that dry season, could lie with safety in the open air. The disciples had not inquired where they were going ; for they had learned to follow their Master trusting, and not asking. But Jesus knew that, to him at least, the night would bring no sleep. Before quitting the chamber, they had joined in chanting the Hallelujah Psalms (Ps. cxv.-cxviii.) ; and he had sung, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me ; I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord : O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my

soul!¹ . . . I will praise thee; for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the head of the corner. . . . Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord. . . . Bind the sacrifice with cords unto the horns of the altar. Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee. Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever.”² In this Psalm he had poured forth all the conflicting emotions of grief, conflict, agony, submission, trust, consolation, hope, triumph, joy, which now agitated his soul. As the paschal supper was itself a type of the sacrifice and the redemption which he was about to fulfil, so the songs that had clustered around the feast, and that to the common Jew were simply a part of the ceremony, to him were like a funeral march to attend him to the cross. Bach, Graun, Mozart, Liszt, and other great composers, have sought to represent the last hours of Christ in music that is the very pathos of woe, the sublimity of sacrifice, the ecstasy of heaven; but no mass nor passion music can approach the tenderness, the sweetness, the sacred joy, of those old Psalms of the temple as sung by Jesus for his own death and burial.

We may well believe that this little company were sad and silent on the way down the hill to the Kedron: it was like walking through the valley of the shadow of death. The

¹ Ps. cxvi. 3, 4.

² Ps. cxviii. 21-29.

disciples had not understood the full meaning of the Lord in his discourse and his prayer ; nor did they realize that his death was so near at hand. But he had spoken of going away, of their seeing him no more, and of their being hated in his name ; and this was enough to fill them with saddening thoughts. The thoughts of Jesus reached farther and deeper. He knew for what purpose Judas had gone out from the supper, and what his enemies were at that moment plotting against him ; he felt himself already forsaken by the disciples to whom he had just spoken of the tenderness of his love, and there was no friend on earth who could share his sorrows ; he felt already the burden of his cross and the pains of death ; and, more than all, he felt already rising in his soul the conflict that he must renew with Satan, who, having failed to turn him at the threshold of his work, would seek to thwart him at its close. Many a one who is great in thinking, and great in action, is not great to suffer ; and the prince of this world, who, after the temptation in the wilderness, had left Jesus "for a season," now made a desperate attempt to assail him through his fears. This last trial would show the world how perfect Jesus was in submission to the will of God, under every form of temptation. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me ; but that the world may know that I love the Father." ¹

¹ John xiv. 31.

The Mount of Olives was dotted here and there with clumps of olive and fig trees, some standing along the highway, others enclosed as gardens, though there were few houses near. To one of these gardens, just across the Kedron, Jesus had been accustomed to resort as a quiet and shady retreat for meditation and prayer; and, as they reached the gate, he took the disciples in with him, but, wishing to be alone, he said to them, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder."¹ He had just prayed with them and for them in the chamber: now he would pray for himself, — would pour out his soul, in direct, earnest pleading with God, who only could help him. But though he must "tread the wine-press alone,"² alone must bear the bitter agony of this conflict with death and hell, his heart yearned after the sense of sympathy and support, which the nearness of friends would give him; and, as he advanced deeper into the shades of the garden, he took with him Peter and James, and John, the disciple whom he loved always to have about his person. Yet even these might not intrude within the sacred spot where he must suffer and struggle and pray and triumph for himself alone. Has not every one known something of this inner conflict, when his heart so yearned for sympathy that he would beg those near him not to go away, and yet so longed for a silent hour of his soul with God, that he would say to his dearest friend, "Leave me a while

¹ Matt. xxvi. 36.² Isa. lxiii. 3.

alone"? So closely did the life of Jesus harmonize with ours in the most tender and sacred of human experiences. At first he took the three disciples who were with him on the mount, as though he would have the witnesses of his glory to cheer him in his sorrow; but, as they passed from the moonlight into the thicker shade, the shadows seemed to thicken also about his soul. "He began to be sorrowful and very heavy;" and, as his anguish deepened, the presence of friends who could not share it only aggravated the pains of death with the thought of parting from them. There is a holy of holies where each soul must enter alone into the presence of God, when death draws aside the veil. God pity any soul which in that hour still looks to human companionship for its solace and support!

The love of Jesus would draw his chosen friends nearer to him at the dread moment of parting; but his agony, intensified by that very love, would keep him aloof. "Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther (about a stone's throw¹), and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." These words fell upon the ears of the disciples, and were afterwards quickened in their remembrance by the scenes which gave them such a deep significance, and by the

¹ Luke xxii. 41.



"LET THIS CUP PASS FROM ME."



resurrection, which made it so clear *who* he was that in the garden had bowed himself to drink the cup; but, just as this cry of anguish broke upon their ears, their eyes, overborne with the sorrows of the evening, closed in slumber.

His first season of prayer brought Jesus no palpable relief. The cup was still before him; "the pains of hell gat hold upon him;" there was no voice of release from heaven; and, though from the first he bowed his will to the will of his Father, his heart shrank from the bitterness and woe that were pressed to his lips. His grief yearned for a word, a look, from his disciples; and his love, too, drew him again to their side, — just as the mother goes back again and again to her child, after she has said her last Good-night. "He cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What! could ye not watch with me one hour?" But this seeming reproof of their neglect grew out of anxiety for their condition; and Jesus merged his own sorrow in pity for the dangers and trials of those he loved. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Whatever may have caused the anguish of his soul, have cast him trembling upon the ground, have wrung from him the imploring cry, "Take away this cup from me," the words and the manner of Jesus with his disciples, in the intervals of his own agony, betray neither weakness nor fear in the

“Man of Sorrows” now left so utterly alone. Had timidity moved him to such “strong crying and tears,”¹ he would have made his escape without waiting to pray. A few hours would have placed him beyond Jordan, out of the reach of his enemies; and he could have saved his life simply by keeping away from Jerusalem. But the thought of fleeing or of hiding did not enter his mind. What he prayed for was either deliverance by his Father’s own hand, or strength to suffer and endure. That one or the other would be granted him, he never doubted for an instant. He saw clearly that his hour was come; but he also had come to this hour, bringing it upon himself by his faithfulness to truth and to God. He knew that his enemies would seize him; but the heroism with which he had faced them in the temple, and rebuked them before the crowd, had not forsaken him now that he was solitary and alone. He knew that his friends would be scattered like sheep, but, as the Good Shepherd, he would be smitten in their stead. He did not flinch from any thing that was before him, through common weakness and fear. Through all the pathos of his grief, his sorrow never loses the dignity of self-control. But he was once more in the furnace of temptation. The very purity, nobleness, and delicacy of his nature made him the more sensitive to pain, to the stings of sorrow, the slights of men, the scoffs of sin; and Satan had now set

¹ Heb.

upon him through nerves overstrained by the excitements and conflicts of the past six days, and by the tender confidences of the past few hours with his disciples. From the spiritual exaltation of his last discourse and prayer, he came to the sudden realization of treachery, desertion, shame, ingratitude, suffering; and the reaction upon such a frame plunged him into the terrors of a despondency in which the dread of being forsaken of his Father overshadowed him, and cast him upon his face. Nothing less than this can be meant by the words, "he began to be sore amazed," — filled with consternation, in a tremor of anguish, — "and to be very heavy" with a weight of despondency that almost crushed out his life, "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." This "horror of great darkness" is the fiercest temptation with which Satan can assail the soul; but through it all Jesus clings, without faltering, to the will of his Father. He asks but to know that the cup is from God, and that God will not take it away. Then, hushing his own conflict not yet finished, and stilling his sorrow, he gently excuses the failings of his disciples: "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak;" he bids them overcome temptation, as he himself is doing, by watching and prayer. He who could so repress his own anguish, pause in his own conflict, be silent about himself, and with such tender compassion care for those who had neglected to care for him, may have been shaken, bruised, burdened, crushed, but was not weak.

Thus roused from slumber, the disciples, moved both by shame and by fear, made an effort to keep awake; but their eyes grew heavy again just as their ears caught these entreating tones, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, thy will be done." Already the Son of man had conquered the fierceness of his anguish. At first he had prayed that if possible the cup might be taken away; but now submission has surmounted sorrow, and he accepts the cup, if this be the will of his Father. How long he lay thus prostrate under the sharpness of his pain, we are not told. His disciples had not come near to seek the meaning of this long, strange conflict. But Jesus could not forget them; he felt that they needed his counsel, his comfort, his grace. Coming out from the grove, he found them asleep again; for their eyes were heavy. They started up bewildered, and "knew not what to answer him." A third time the same prayer broke upon the ear of night, and this time kept the disciples wakeful. The trial of Jesus had spent itself; but his soul, in its victory over the flesh, had wrought him to such a pitch of agony that the blood oozed like sweat through his pores. The watch-hour was over. His disciples might sleep now, if they could; for their Master would lay upon them no further burden for himself. But how *could* they sleep when he said, "The hour is come: the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners"? Startled and all awake they spring to their feet to

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THE ARREST.

surround him as he says, "Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me."

At this moment the noise of feet and of voices was heard in front of the garden. Judas knew that Jesus was in the habit of resorting to this spot; and, rightly guessing that he would go there after the supper, had urged the chief priests and Pharisees to take advantage of the night and of this secluded spot, to seize his Master without the risk of raising a mob. So now a band of soldiers and officers, with lanterns and torches and weapons, came hurrying up to take Jesus by surprise. But what was their surprise when he stepped calmly forward, and said, "Whom seek ye?" When they answered, "Jesus of Nazareth," he replied at once, "I am he." At the same time Judas rushed up to him, and said, "Hail, Master!" and kissed him; for this was the signal by which he had arranged to make Jesus known to the officers. It was not needed. Jesus had made himself known; but he stamped forever the baseness of the traitor, when he turned, and said to him, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" The whole majesty of Jesus centred in the look with which he gave this reproof, and awaited the agents of the traitor; and as with the mob at Nazareth, and once in the temple, that look smote the soldiers with awe, so that "they went backward, and fell to the ground." By this strange power he might even now have saved his life, if that had been his purpose; but, as he would not escape

from his foes by flight, neither would he subdue them by supernatural power. Having conquered Satan by prayer, and subjected his own will to the will of his Father, this Man of Sorrows, who just now lay wrestling and groaning upon the ground, stands forth with an ineffable calmness, King of the world, King of death. To the soldiers who have not yet staggered back to their feet, he says again, "Whom seek ye?" and when they say, "Jesus of Nazareth," he answers, "I have told you that I am he: if, therefore, ye seek me, let these go their way," the same unselfish love always thinking of others, caring for his disciples, and surrendering himself on condition that they should go free. This concern for them they answered with an impulse of courage that would risk their lives in his defence, "Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" and, before Jesus could answer, Peter had dealt about him with his sword, and had struck a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. But Jesus would have no violence in his cause: he would conquer by suffering. He said to Peter, "Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" And, to show the impotence and presumption of such a way of serving him, he added, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" The same divine consciousness that stirred within him as a boy in the temple, that gave him

strength in the wilderness, that moved him to raise Lazarus from the dead, that enabled him to speak to the rulers and Pharisees as King and Judge,—this feeling of a union with God, so close and sure that it gave him command of heavenly powers, now led him to assert his majesty as the Messiah in the very act of surrendering himself a prisoner. That such power and majesty are his, he shows by healing with a touch the servant whom Peter had wounded ; and how sublime does he appear in forbearing to use this supernatural power to defend himself, and at the same time using it in an act of mercy to an enemy who had come to do him violence ! All this while the soldiers were too bewildered to seize him. But with a lofty innocence Jesus turned to the crowd of armed men who had come like cowards in the night, and now stood like cowards around him, and said, “ Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves to take me ? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not ; but this is your hour and the power of darkness.” And so he yielded himself up not to them, but to the fate that his Father had appointed for him. At this “ all the disciples forsook him, and fled.” They were not cowards, for they were just now ready to fight for him ; but here was the sudden and final collapse of their hopes of Jesus as the Christ. Not all his teachings and warnings, not his frequent talk of dying, not even the supper by which he had told them to remember his body broken and

his blood shed, had sufficed to wean them from the notion that he would show himself the Son of God, confound his enemies, and possess his throne. He still talked of angels at his command, still showed his miraculous power, yet allowed himself to be taken to what would be certain death. This confounded them ; all earthly hopes sank ; and, before the power of spiritual ideas could rally in their stead, the instinct of saving life seized them like a panic, and they ran away.

A young man, probably a friend of Jesus from a neighboring house, startled from his sleep, had run out in his night-dress to see what was passing : being laid hold of by the crowd, he tore himself away from his garment, and ran to hide. In all the confusion and terror of the scene, — swords, staves, lanterns, blows, outcries, — Jesus alone was calm. Deserted by everybody, he went with the soldiers to face the men who were sworn to take his life.

This scene in Gethsemane vouches for its own reality. Such a representation of Jesus could never have been invented by his disciples. In making up a story, they would have sought to present their Master as a hero, and according to their own notions of what the Messiah should be. But their enemies would seize upon this agony in the garden as a sign of weakness, as a proof that a man who would thus suffer and groan in view of death was no true Christ, no worthy King of Israel ; and, besides, the story throws such

discredit upon the disciples themselves that nothing short of the highest truth and honesty could have induced them to tell it. They would never have made up any thing of the sort. Such a story, at once so minute and real in the particulars of the sleeping of the disciples, the coming of the soldiers, the attempt to fight, the running away, the seizing of the young man, and his escape, and at the same time so wide of any motive for invention in the words and acts attributed to Jesus, — must have come from witnesses who reported what they had seen and heard.

The impression that this scene now makes upon us is quite other than that which it would have made if gotten up as a legend upon the Jews of that time. As has been said already, *we* get no impression of weakness in looking upon Jesus prostrate in the garden: the scene is in keeping with his life and character, and each sheds light upon the other. Without this we should have missed the feeling of brotherhood with us in sorrow, that now makes Jesus one with us; but with this scene we realize how much keener, sorer, than any sorrow known to us, was that he suffered through that sacrifice of himself for man, by which he put himself in our place.

In reading this story, there are two facts that should never be separated. The first is, that there was no physical pain and no visible danger that aroused his amazing agony. Afterwards we see him under torture, his forehead pierced

with thorns, his back torn with stripes, his knees fainting under the cross, his hands and feet nailed to the tree, and all this amid scoffs and jeers, spitting and cursing, and every form of insult; but, though thus wounded in body and in spirit, he utters no cry of pain, and no prayer for relief. But here in the garden, where there is no visible cause of pain, and no enemy to be seen, where his disciples are at hand, and he is praying to his Father, he bursts into such an agony that the grove resounds with his groanings, and the blood oozes from his body. What *can* this mean? The second fact is, that he does not attempt to escape from a danger that is near and visible. A great soul may flee from personal danger without the reproach of weakness or fear; as Moses fled from Pharaoh, as Elijah fled from Ahaz, as Joseph and Mary fled from Herod. This was to save a life from present peril for a future good.

But Jesus would not flee. Whatever the suffering was that so racked him in the garden, it was suffering that he chose to endure. What was that suffering? what could it have been but the fulfilment of his own saying, when he set up the memorial of his death? — “This is my body which is broken for you; this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

And, while thus suffering and sorrowing for us, Jesus has set before us the dignity of sorrow, and the strength of submission. It is no more a sin in us than it was a sin in him,

to feel the pangs of grief, and to long and pray to be freed from them. Not only can we have a will that seeks and urges all possible ways of deliverance from suffering; but the having such a will is what gives reality to suffering, and meaning to submission. We have a will for the possible, but hold this in deference to the will of God; and here is the dignity of sorrow. We have a will; but for that which is not possible we merge our will in the will of God. All the chords of human grief are gathered up into that one throb of agony that vibrates in unison with every suffering, sorrowing spirit, — “O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me;” and all the virtue of submission, by which the divine spirit enters into the human with strength and consolation, is uttered in that gentle sigh of resignation, “Not my will, but thine, be done.”

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE JEWISH TRIAL.

THAT judges should be up and ready to hold court before daybreak, is matter of surprise even in a hot climate, where the work of the day must be done chiefly in the early hours of the morning. But in the case of Jesus this was part of the plot for his arrest and condemnation. Members of the supreme court had bargained with Judas to betray Jesus into their hands ; they knew he had gone with soldiers to hunt for his Master ; and they were in readiness to hurry through the form of a trial, before the affair should be noised abroad. Their whole proceeding was as cowardly as it was unjust. They did not dare to have Jesus put to death privately ; for the hosannas of the people were yet ringing in their ears, and they could not count upon popular sympathy in a secret act of violence. To win over the populace to their side, they must go through the forms of law, and accuse Jesus of crimes against religion that would rouse the fanaticism of the Jews ; and, to obtain from the Roman governor an order for his crucifixion, they must also accuse

him of some capital offence against the state. Besides, they were such sticklers for the law, — or at least for their version of it, — that they must satisfy their consciences even while plotting murder in their hearts. But to carry their point they must take the people by surprise, and get the trial well under way before there was a chance for re-action. So the members of the sanhedrim were up before the cock-crowing, ready for a notice from the high priest that Jesus was in his power.

The office of high priest, once so dignified and sacred, — an office for life and hereditary, — had come to be a political prize, and even a matter of bargain and sale. Since all political power had been taken from the Jews, they looked to the high priest as the head around which their national feeling could rally. Because of the influence which this feeling gave him, the high priest was courted by the civil power, and in turn was sometimes willing to become a tool of the government for the sake of his place. Thus King Herod set aside one and another high priest to make room for some new favorite who would better serve his purposes; and he once appointed to this office a youth of seventeen. Hence it came to pass, that, in addition to the ruling high priest, there might be in Jerusalem one or more who had formerly held the office, but for some cause had been set aside; and at the time of our story, though Caiaphas was the high priest, his father-in-law Annas, who had filled the office,

was still alive ; and, as a compliment to his age and standing, the captors of Jesus led him to Annas first, who caused him to be bound, and then sent to Caiaphas ; who, at that strange hour, held a preliminary examination in his own house, and then summoned the sanhedrim to meet at daybreak. This house was built after the fashion of the East, in the form of a quadrangle around a court which was open to the sky. On the side next the street was a heavy door, or gate, and an arch leading into the court : this was the “ porch,” or entrance. The rooms were built around the four sides of the court, with lattices or windows looking out upon it, or sometimes entirely open to it, so that one had but to go up a step or two from the court to a ceiled chamber which, on the court side, was all open to the light and air. In this case awnings were used as a protection against sun and rain. In summer, the court was made bright with fountains and flowers ; and in winter a fire was kindled there for guests on entering and servants in waiting. As Jesus was brought in, the high priest was seated in a salon, or hall, on the ground-floor adjoining the court ; the servants were up and stirring, and had spread a fire of coals in the court near this hall, to keep off the chill of the night air.

In the hope of drawing from him some statement or admission by which to accuse him before the sanhedrim, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his doctrine. But Jesus answered by referring to his public

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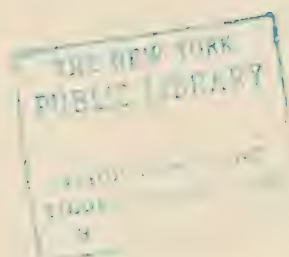
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teachings, which were known to everybody in Jerusalem ; “ I spake openly to the world ; I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort ; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me ? Ask them which heard me what I have said unto them : behold, they know what I said.” This answer was fair and reasonable. Jesus was not bound to accuse himself : there was no use of explaining his doctrine to a judge who was bent upon condemning him ; and it was for the high priest to say upon what ground he had had him arrested. Jesus had no *secret* plans nor teachings ; he was in no conspiracy against the chief priests or the rulers. Whatever he had to say about them, he had said openly and to their faces. But, just and proper as this answer was, no sooner had Jesus spoken than “ one of the officers which stood by struck him with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so ? ” This was simply an outrage ; and it shows how far removed was the tribunal at which Jesus then stood, from a true court of justice, which should always protect a prisoner from rudeness and insult. Jesus bore the insult meekly, but stood on his rights : “ If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil ; but, if well, why smitest thou me ? ”

All this is reported by John, who was an eye-witness of what passed in the house of Caiaphas. He and Peter had soon recovered from their fright in the garden. They had

not run far when their love for their Master brought them to a standstill; and, seeing they were not pursued, they turned about and followed Jesus, though at a halting pace and "afar off." It so happened that John "was known to the high priest," and hence he was allowed to go in to the palace with the guard; for no one could enter except by permission of the servant who sat by the wicket in the porch. Peter therefore stood at the door without; but John presently went and spoke to the maid that kept the door, and brought Peter in with him. Peter sat down with the servants to warm himself at the fire, while John went into the hall where the examination of Jesus was going on. After a while, one of the maid-servants of the house, peering into Peter's face, recognized him as a man she had somewhere seen with Jesus, and charged him with being one of his disciples. Peter denied this stoutly, and pretended not to know what she was talking about. But, feeling uneasy, he moved away from the fire, and went and stood in the porch. At this moment the cock crew; but Peter was too much taken up with his danger to notice it. Several persons were standing around in the porch; and pretty soon another maid pointed him out, and said openly, "This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth." Poor Peter, having begun to lie, was driven to deny again, and this time with an oath. To get rid of his questioner, he sneaked back again to the fire. But by this time everybody had





PETER AT THE FIRE.

noticed him ; and, as this company of soldiers and servants were idly waiting for further orders, it was quite a pastime to watch the words and actions of the stranger. For a while they let him alone ; and Peter, to make himself appear at ease, took part in the talk around the fire. But in so doing he roused their suspicions again by his accent and dialect, which marked him as a Galilean. This made the bystanders so confident that several said to him, " Surely thou also art one of them ; for thy speech bewrayeth thee." It was getting decidedly hot for Peter ; all his courage had oozed out of him, since a man always makes himself a coward when he takes refuge in a lie ; and when a kinsman of the man whose ear Peter had cut off came up and said, " Did I not see thee in the garden with him ?" he " began to curse and to swear, saying, " I know not the man." The hall being open to the court, this loud talking was heard by Jesus ; " and the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter ;" and at that instant the cock crew again. That look ! that sound ! It was like the day of doom. There stood Jesus before his accusers, meek and patient under insult, calm and fearless in face of death. And here was he who had boasted, " Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended ;" " Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death ;" " Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." Here he was cowering before the maid, moving from the fire

to the porch, and the porch to the fire, trying to escape observation, and afraid to admit that he had ever seen Jesus. There stood his Master bearing witness for the truth; and here was he lying and denying. That look of reproof and pity brought him to himself; and the crowing cock sharpened the pang that Jesus had warned him of all that he had now done. Overwhelmed with shame and anguish, he hurried out into the street, and, wrapping his face in his mantle, "wept bitterly," bitterly bewailing his weakness and sin, and grieving, oh, how bitterly! that he could not go to Jesus, and fall at his feet, and confess his shame. Alas for us when those whom we have injured are beyond hearing our confession, witnessing our repentance, speaking our forgiveness! But this sin of Peter proved his salvation. For the assertion of self-confidence, we find in him afterwards the endurance of faith; for the impulse of enthusiasm, the glow of love that made him more than willing to go to prison and to death for the name of Jesus.

It was now daybreak. Caiaphas had already sent messengers to summon the sanhedrim; and as soon as the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes were assembled, Jesus was led before this supreme council to be tried by Jewish law. That law required at least two witnesses to a crime the penalty of which was death. The enemies of Jesus had trumped up many accusations against him, and witness after witness was called; but no two of them agreed, or the thing

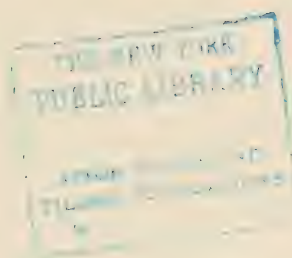
charged was not serious enough to make out a case ; and, for reasons already given, the judges, though wishing to condemn Jesus, felt bound to keep to the letter of the law. At last two witnesses were found who testified that he had said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days." To the Jews the temple was so sacred, that to speak lightly of it, or threaten to injure it, was blasphemy ; and this was a sin to be punished by death. But even these witnesses told different stories ; and the high priest tried to get Jesus to say something that the council could lay hold of to condemn him. Jesus, however, would make no reply to such witnesses ; for he knew that his judges knew he had spoken these words at the very time when he had shown his zeal for the temple as a holy place by turning out the market-men and the money-changers.¹ Determined to find him guilty, the high priest said to him, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus answered, "Thou hast said," —meaning "Thou sayest truly," or, "I am He ;" and, though they would not now believe nor accept in evidence the truths he had spoken and the works he had done, yet the time should come when they must see him as their King and Judge. "I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the

¹ John ii. 19. It is an incidental proof of the genuineness of John's Gospel, that he alone gives the time and place of the saying of Jesus that was brought against him by the false witnesses, and which Matthew and Mark there report.

Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

At these words the high priest rent his clothes in token of his horror at such "blasphemy." And blasphemy indeed it was if Jesus was nothing but a common man. The high priest looked for a Christ who should come from heaven as the Son of God; and Jesus declared himself to be all that Caiaphas meant by that title, and also to have at his disposal the power and glory of heaven. This was the same thing for which they once took up stones to stone him,—because, "being man, he made himself God." And here in the most solemn circumstances, when he knew that his life was at stake, and when he might have saved himself by explaining away his words, and rejecting the sense his enemies had put upon them, Jesus did nevertheless with perfect clearness and calmness accept the title of the Christ, declare himself to be the Son of God, and his place to be the right hand of the power of God. As the "Son of David" he had entered Jerusalem in triumph; as the "Son of God" he would die upon the cross; as the "Son of man" he would come again in the clouds of heaven,—in each and all "the Christ." At these words the whole council cried out, "He is guilty of death;" and, so far as it lay in their power, he was condemned.

The servants and soldiers were quick in taking up the feelings of the council toward their prisoner. It was rare





sport for them, that this weak and helpless man should be the Christ; and they took the vilest ways to show their contempt. They spit in his face; they blindfolded him, and then struck him, and said, "Prophecy unto us, thou Christ: who is he that smote thee?" So far from interfering, the judges encouraged this abuse; for they wanted to rouse the spirit of the mob to justify their own action. But not a word, not a cry, not a murmur, did they draw from their victim. "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter; and, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so opened he not his mouth."¹

¹ Isa. liii. 7.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

PILATE AND HEROD.

Two points the sanhedrim had already gained: they had found a pretext for condemning Jesus according to Jewish law; and they had roused against him the hatred and contempt of the low fellows in their service. But, since they no longer had power to inflict the penalty of death, they must prevail on the Roman governor to order him to be crucified, and must hurry up the case before a re-action should seize upon the people. So they bound their prisoner, and dragged him to the castle of the governor, where he had also his hall of judgment.

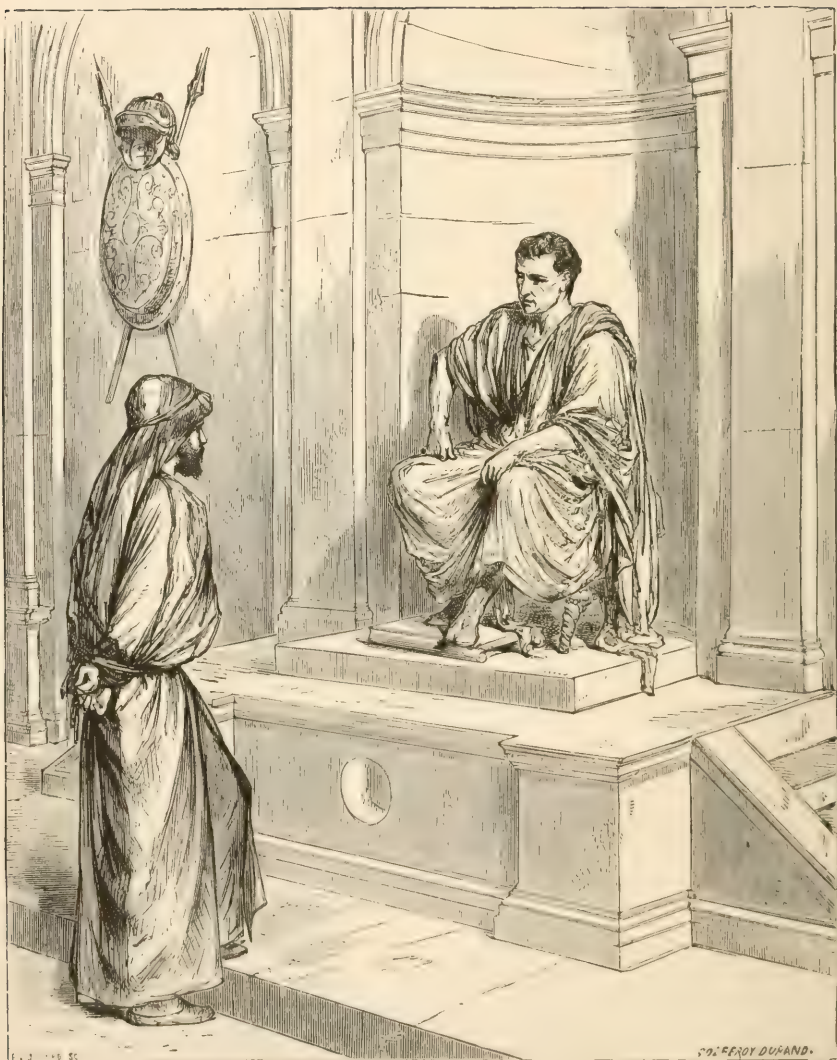
At this point the story gives a curious example how the most wicked passions and intentions can be mixed with religious forms and scruples. At the time of the Passover the Jews were required to keep themselves from every thing that their religion regarded as unclean. Now, the Roman governor was a heathen; and to go into a heathen court would unfit them for the Passover: so they sent in the prisoner for whose blood they thirsted; but they themselves

went not into the judgment-hall, lest they should be defiled. For nearly thirty years, or since Archelaus had been set aside, Judea had been governed by a *procurator* sent from Rome; and at this time the office was held by Pontius Pilate, who had held the place for several years. Pilate was ambitious, and fond of popularity; but, in trying to keep in favor at Rome, he had made himself very unpopular with the Jews. He had trampled on their religious feelings by setting up in Jerusalem the image of the emperor, and by taking for common uses some of the sacred treasures of the temple; and more than once he had almost raised an insurrection, and then had put down the mob by severe and even cruel measures. The Jews hated him, yet they were willing to use him as a tool. Many were the complaints of his injustice that they had sent to Rome; but now they sought to persuade him to an act of injustice by appealing both to his ambition and his fear, since, like all time-serving men, Pilate was timid. Yet as a Roman he was trained to respect the law; and when Jesus was brought before him in such haste and with such clamor, though this was by the Jewish court itself, he insisted upon proceeding according to law and evidence. So he came out of the judgment-hall, and said to the members of the council, "What accusation bring ye against this man?"¹ The sanhedrim thought they could take the governor by storm, that their coming to him in a

¹ John xviii. 29-31.

body, bringing for sentence a prisoner whom they had condemned, would be taken as sufficient: so they answered, "If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up to thee." Pilate, supposing that this was one of their religious quarrels in which he did not care to meddle, said, "Take ye him, and judge him according to your law." They had so many disputes about questions of their law which he could not understand, that he was glad to get rid of the case by allowing them to do as they pleased, since he knew they would not dare to harm the life of their prisoner. But his life was what they were after; and they answered, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." When they spoke of Jesus as deserving death, Pilate thought the case might be more serious than he had supposed; and the Jews, knowing that the governor would not condemn a prisoner for an offence toward their religion, trumped up against Jesus political charges, which, if true, would make him criminal in the eye of the state. So they began to accuse him of sedition, saying, "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ, a king." Now, Pilate knew well enough that in their hearts they hated Cæsar and his taxes, and longed for nothing so much as their Messiah to deliver them. But, though he knew their hypocrisy, he wished to pacify them; since, at the Passover, the city was crowded with the more zealous and fanatical Jews,





JESUS BEFORE PILATE.

and it was difficult to keep the peace when their religious passions were aroused. Every riot at Jerusalem told at Rome against the governor; and as Pilate had his own interests much at heart, he knew how to be compromising as well as cruel: so now he wished either to get rid of this case, or to make the best of it for himself.

The conversation just reported took place upon the open pavement before the judgment-hall. Pilate now went into the hall where he had left the prisoner bound, and asked Jesus, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" The answer of Jesus showed that he knew Pilate had been put up to this question;¹ and Pilate replied in a way that showed he had no political charge against his prisoner, "Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me." But they had brought vague charges without proof; and Pilate would not assume the guilt of his prisoner, nor condemn Jesus unheard. So, in the hope of getting some facts to go upon, he said to him, "What hast thou done?" The answer of Jesus was directly to the point of the charge against him, and is one of the most remarkable of his sayings as to his life and mission. He at once avowed himself a king, and disavowed the charge of setting himself up against the civil government. "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is

¹ John xviii. 35.

my kingdom not from hence." He has "a kingdom." He is therefore more than a teacher, a prophet, a reformer: he is a *king*, he has authority, he has servants, he gives laws, he claims to be obeyed, and to have the power of giving rewards and punishments. In one word, he is the Messiah, the Christ promised in the Old Testament as the King of the Jews. And this kingdom he has already set up in the world. He has been preaching of the kingdom of heaven; he has promised its rewards to his followers; he has declared that he shall come again as king, in power and glory, to judge the world.¹ And now that the Jewish council has condemned him to death for blasphemy in saying that he was the Christ, and Pilate is called upon to ratify the sentence and order his execution, he does not complain that on *this* point he has been misquoted or misunderstood, does not disclaim the title of "Christ, a king," but openly and solemnly avows it, and talks about "*my* kingdom" and "*my* servants," as any king might do. But this kingdom, though in the world, was not of the worldly sort; though in spirit and principles against the world, it was not a fighting kingdom making war upon existing governments, nor plotting their overthrow. In the case brought before Pilate, the offence or wrong did not lie with Jesus in calling himself a king, but with his accusers, in perverting his teachings about his kingdom, and charging

¹ Matt. xxv. 31-46.

him with stirring up the nation to revolt against Cæsar. This he denies. He has no intentions against the government, no officers, no army, no treasury, nothing of nor for this world; but, for all that, he is a king. Pilate is a good deal mystified by the reply and the bearing of the prisoner. Such a notion of a king and a kingdom had never occurred to him. So he asked Jesus again, "Art thou a king, then?" With all the calmness and dignity that these words could convey, Jesus answered, "Thou sayest that I am a king," — a king thou callest me, and a king I am. Not one iota does he abate from the force and meaning of that title. But he will not leave his judge in any doubt of his meaning; and he adds, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." There is a sphere of spiritual things in which truth is as certain and as absolute as are facts in the sphere of science. In that sphere Jesus, who knew truth as God knows it, who spoke the truth of God, and whose life was truth itself, was king, and had a right to demand that men should hear his voice. Pilate was in part puzzled, in part startled, by these words. Perhaps he saw in his prisoner an innocent enthusiast who was possessed with the harmless notion that he was a king; perhaps he was awed by the look and manner of Jesus, that had so often caused men to tremble at his word; perhaps he was pricked in his conscience by the question

whether he cared enough for truth to be willing to do justice to his prisoner: and, so musing, he said aloud, "What is truth?" and went out again to the Jews, and saith unto them, "I find in him no fault."

The chief priests and elders began to clamor against Jesus with all sorts of accusations, to all which he made no reply. His silence caused Pilate to wonder still more at the demeanor of the prisoner. After what Jesus had said to him of the nature of his kingdom, and of his own spirit and intentions as a king, no doubt the charge of sedition sounded to the governor absurd and malicious; hence it seemed strange to him, that the prisoner did not clear himself by a word. But, though urged again and again to speak, he yet answered nothing. Jesus knew the temper of his accusers. They had seized him by stealth and without cause; they would be satisfied with nothing but his life; for this they had brought false charges; and, should he answer one lie, they would bring up another: and so he threw it upon the conscience of the governor to do him justice. Seeing how the case stood, Pilate said to the chief priests, in hearing of the crowd of people now gathered round, "I find no fault in this man." Maddened at the thought of losing their victim, the priests shouted in fierce tones and with violent gestures, "He stirs up the people against Cæsar, from Galilee to Jerusalem." At the mention of Galilee, Pilate thought he saw his way out of the diffi-

culty. His own jurisdiction did not reach northward beyond the limits of Samaria, — Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, being the ruler of Galilee; and it so happened that Herod was at the time in Jerusalem. There had been a dispute between Pilate and Herod, which had made them enemies; and Pilate thought he could make a friendly advance to Herod by an open mark of respect for his authority over one of his own subjects, and at the same time could get rid of an unwelcome prisoner. So he sent Jesus to Herod; but, though he gained Herod's friendship, the prisoner came back on his hands.

Herod was glad enough to have Jesus brought before him, and to sit in state with his guard, with such a prisoner at his bar; but he had no notion of acting the part of a judge. Ever since his murder of John the Baptist, Herod had been troubled with reports about Jesus and his wonderful works. At first he feared that he was John the Baptist risen from the dead;¹ but at last, with a mixture of superstition and vanity, he was eager to see this famous prophet, to hear what his doctrines were, and especially to see some miracle done by him. Now, he thought, this wish could be gratified: so he attempted to draw Jesus out by many questions; "but he answered him nothing."² The chief priests and scribes were determined not to lose their victim through any change of his judges, or any halting in their action. At last they

¹ Matt. xiv. 1, 2.

² Luke xxiii. 8-10.

had him in their power ; they had condemned him as worthy of death ; and they had no notion of allowing him to be sent off to Galilee. So they ran after the guard to Herod's palace, and there began to accuse Jesus in the most violent terms. Herod saw that he could make nothing out of the case. Jesus showed no fear of his authority, no wish for his favor, no disposition to gratify him with a show of wonders : so, setting him down for an enthusiast, Herod began to make sport of him ; and his officers and soldiers were quick to follow his example. Jesus was accused of making himself a king : so they put on him one of their own showy cloaks to make fun of his royalty, and with mocking cheers and salutations sent him back to Pilate.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

JESUS, OR BARABBAS.

THOUGH Pilate was pleased that he had made Herod his friend, he did not at all thank him for sending back his prisoner. Still he could now fortify himself by Herod's opinion; and so he resolved to do the prisoner justice by setting him free. Accordingly he summoned again the sanhedrim, — and by this time a great crowd had gathered to watch the proceedings, — and gave his decision, that openly in their presence he had examined Jesus upon the charge which they had brought against him, of stirring up the people to revolt, “but had found no fault” in him; and that Herod also had examined him, but had found nothing that called for the sentence of death which the sanhedrim demanded. Thus in the most public and formal manner, by the chief authority of the Roman Government in Judea, after an open and searching examination, Jesus was pronounced innocent of any political offence that called for punishment by the civil power. Had there been the least evidence that he was stirring up rebellion, or making the

people discontented with Roman rule, Pilate and Herod would have made capital for themselves at headquarters by inflicting upon him the sentence of death. But he was acquitted on this very charge. Hence all attempts to explain away the crucifixion of Jesus, as due to political or state charges, fall to the ground.

It was the duty of Pilate, having pronounced Jesus innocent, to set him free, and protect him against any violence from the mob. He saw clearly where the right of the matter lay ; and he wished as a judge to do his duty by the prisoner, for he was satisfied that the charges against him had been trumped up by malice. But at the same time he was anxious for the favor of the Jews ; and to appease them he offered to sacrifice his prisoner to their hate so far as to chastise him before releasing him. This was a gross injustice ; and, so far from relieving Pilate from his dilemma, it led him on to the fatal step that he wished to avoid. Seeing that Pilate was vacillating, the crowd grew more violent in its outcries, demanding that Jesus should be sentenced. The governor, who was fast losing the character of the judge in that of the politician, now thought of another expedient for saving the prisoner. In some way, — perhaps as a concession to the national feeling of the Jews on the part of their conquerors, — the custom had grown up of releasing to the people at the Passover any prisoner whom they should choose. The governor thought to take advan-



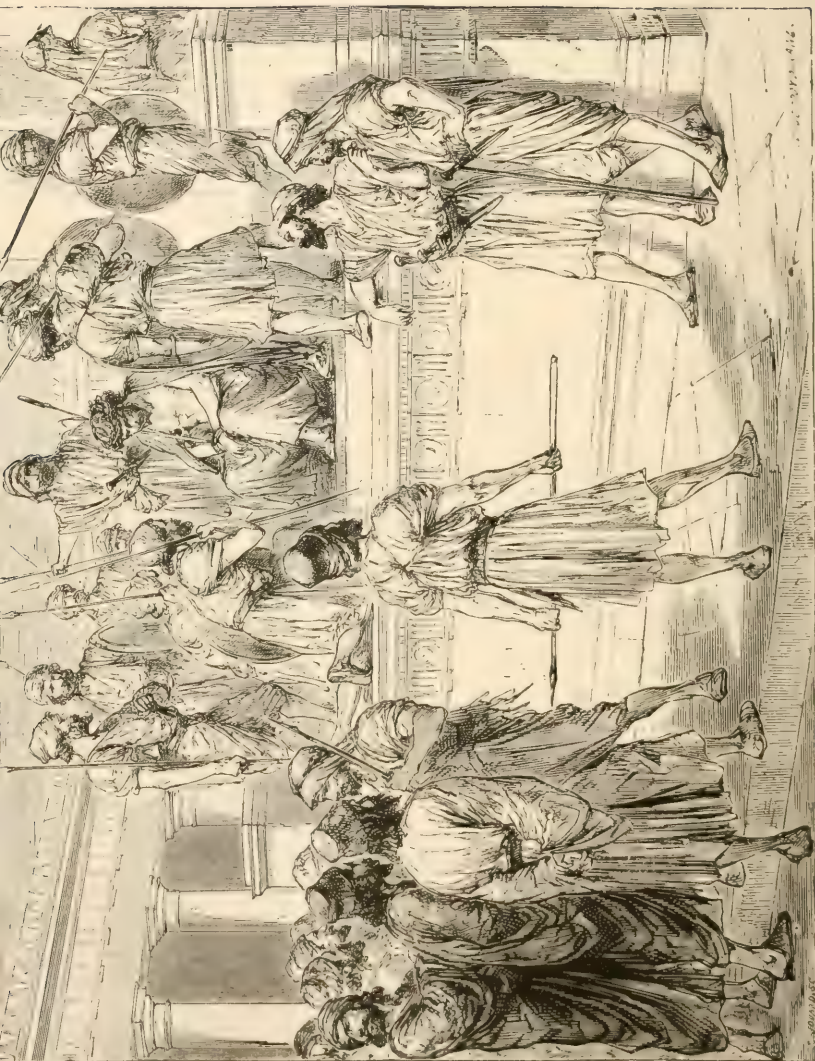


tage of this custom for releasing Jesus ; and, to make sure of his point, he set up by contrast a notorious criminal named Barabbas. The sanhedrim had accused Jesus of stirring up the people to sedition ; and for this they demanded that he should be put to death. Well, if they really wished to show their loyalty by making sedition a capital crime, here was Barabbas already condemned to die for the crime of which Jesus was proved innocent ; for there was no doubt that Barabbas had made an insurrection, and had committed robbery and murder in the fray. By setting up this man in contrast with the meek and inoffensive Jesus, Pilate thought to shame the crowd into some sense of justice and humanity : so he asked them, “ Whom will ye that I release unto you ? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ ? ” To give the formality of law to the release of a prisoner, Pilate now sat down on the judgment-seat. At this moment he was startled by a message from his wife, that she had been much troubled about Jesus in a dream, and begging her husband to “ have nothing to do with that just man.” But he had already gone too far. By taking the populace into his counsels, he had committed himself to be bound by their wishes : in offering to scourge a prisoner whom he had declared innocent, he had tampered with the spirit that thirsted for the prisoner’s blood. Prompted by the chief priests, the mob now began to cry out for the release of Barabbas. “ But what, then,” asked Pilate, “ shall I do

with Jesus, whom ye call the King of the Jews?" Startled and shocked by the maddening cry, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate strove again and again to pacify them, saying, "Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him." Unhappy man! to what a pass he had brought himself by once wavering from his duty! Here he was interceding with a mob for the life of a prisoner whom he had found innocent, and was bound to release and protect. As often as he put in a plea that Jesus might be spared, the cry went up the more fiercely, "Crucify him, crucify him!" till the tumult was growing dangerous. At last, in a fit of weakness, he sought to shift the responsibility from himself to them. "He took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it." With one voice the people cried, "His blood be on us and on our children;" and, to pacify them, he set Barabbas free, and delivered Jesus to be scourged. This brutal and needless torture of one condemned to be crucified was quite common under Roman law. The prisoner was made fast with cords to a frame or post; his back was stripped bare; and he was beaten with knotted thongs till he was ready to faint, and even to die, through pain and loss of blood. So Jesus was scourged before the jeering crowd. Then, with his back torn and bleeding, he was given over to the soldiers for their rough sport. They gathered all their comrades around Jesus,



THE SCOURGING.



JESUS MOCKED BY THE SOLDIERS.

stripped off the rest of his clothing, and put on him a scarlet robe; they platted a crown of thorns, and put this upon his head; they put a reed in his right hand; and, having thus arrayed him in mock royalty, they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" When they had given vent to their ridicule, they let loose their malice: they smote him with their hands; they spit upon him; they took the reed that they had given him as a sceptre, and struck him with it on the head. Pilate was so moved at these cruelties that he interfered, and appealed to the compassion of the people, saying, "Behold the man!" But he could not chain up the tiger that he had loosed. Louder and fiercer came the cry, "Crucify him, crucify him!"—"But I find no fault in him," said Pilate. "We too have a law," they cried; though you do not allow us to punish, we can judge and condemn; "and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." That title roused again the superstitious fears of Pilate; and he led Jesus apart to learn of him whence he came. But Jesus, who was still smarting under the injustice of Pilate, would have nothing to say to a judge who had thrice pronounced him innocent, and then had ordered him to be scourged. His dignified silence under falsehood, wrong, cruelty, insult, was itself a testimony to his character; but Pilate, fearing that his authority should be slighted if the bystanders saw how the prisoner refused to answer him,

tried to threaten Jesus by a show of his power. "Speakest thou not to me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?" Now the prisoner spoke; the abuse of his person, the threat of his life, could not move him; he would endure in silence all manner of injustice and evil against himself: but the power of life and death was in the hands of his Father; and this boast of Pilate was an insult to the divine majesty, that Jesus felt called to rebuke. Just as in the garden he had surrendered himself not to the Roman legion, but to the will of his Father, who could have sent legions of angels to deliver him, so now he should be put to death through his voluntary obedience to that same divine will that had ruled his life. "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." The chief priests and scribes had means of judging the true mission of Jesus, which Pilate as a Gentile could not possess: their guilt was greater than his, which was simply that of injustice to a prisoner whom he did not know. This appeal at once to the conscience of Pilate as guilty of an unjust judgment, and to the source to which he was responsible for his power and the use of it, attended as it was by the majestic look of the Son of God, so awed the weak-principled governor that he sought by all means to recover Jesus from the enemies to whom he had surrendered him. But

the Jews thwarted his wish by appealing on the other side to his love of place and power: "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend. Whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar." The hypocrites! as Pilate knew them to be,—at that moment longing for nothing so much as a Messiah who should break the yoke of Rome, yet demanding that Jesus should be put to death upon the charge of sedition they had trumped up against him! The crisis could no longer be delayed: Pilate must either yield to the mob, or risk their hatred being used to oust him from office for screening a rebel. For a few moments the conflict waxed fiercer and fiercer between his reluctance and their rage, his sense of justice and his love of power; the more furious their outcries, the more feeble his remonstrance:—

"Behold your king."

"Away with him, away with him! Crucify him!"

"Shall I crucify your king?"

"We have no king but Cæsar. Away! away! Crucify!"

Then Pilate delivered Jesus unto them to be crucified.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE TRAITOR.

THE order to crucify Jesus, that filled the Pharisees with triumph, and gave a brutal sport to the soldiers and the mob, struck one of the bystanders with terror and despair. The bribe that Judas had taken for betraying his Lord now burnt his hands, burnt into his soul: he loathed the sight of it, loathed the thought of it, felt the guilt and shame of it; must get rid of it, if so be he can cancel his crime, and save its victim. One can hardly believe that money alone tempted Judas to betray Jesus; for covetous as he was, and accustomed to pilfer from the little store that the apostles had for their purchases and charities, thirty shekels, or twenty dollars, seems too paltry a motive to such a crime: though some disciples nowadays will do very mean things for very small gains! Judas may have joined Jesus at the first from mixed motives of religious enthusiasm and worldly gain, with a zeal for the Messiah's kingdom, and a belief that Jesus would prove to be the nation's hope, in which event it would be a good thing to have been among his

earliest adherents. He so far won the confidence of the little band that he was made its treasurer, and kept the bag. But as time rolled by, and Jesus made no demonstration toward a kingdom, but lived on in poverty, and grew more severe in his teachings, Judas was so disappointed as to his Master's character and purposes, and as to his own ambitious hopes, and moreover was so piqued at the personal reproofs of Jesus, and the preference shown to Peter, James, and John, that he resolved to break from what he felt to be a losing concern, and to bring matters to a head by a direct issue between Jesus and the sanhedrim. At the same time he would gratify his covetousness by a little gain. Still he could not rid himself of anxiety for the result of his scheme: so he hovered round the trial to see how things would turn. The abuse and cruelty to which Jesus was subjected, and his meekness and patience under injury, had told already on the traitor's heart. None knew better than he how perfectly innocent Jesus was of all that was charged against him; and, when he saw that he was condemned, the shame of his own share in the transaction seized him so strongly that he hurried to rescue his Master, if possible, by proclaiming the innocence of Jesus, confessing his own sin, and paying back the bribe; at least, he hoped thus to rid himself of a responsibility which had begun to torment him. "He brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have

betrayed innocent blood.” But the priests cared nothing for guilt or innocence, for Judas or Jesus. They had used Judas as a tool, and, having gained their object, were ready to throw him away in contempt. “What is that to us? see thou to that.” This answer drove the poor wretch to despair. “He cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.”

But the sanctimonious Pharisees, however much they might pollute their souls with the passion of murder, would not pollute the treasury with the price of blood. So they bought with it a “potter’s field to bury strangers in;” but the common people, knowing the story, called it “Aceldama, the Field of Blood.”

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE LAST HOUR.

THE cross was ready. Crucifixion being a common mode of punishment with the Romans, and especially for slaves and the worst class of criminals, the instrument was always at hand, in charge of officers of the law. Upon this day three thieves were to be crucified; but the chief of them, Barabbas, had been set free by the choice of the people, and his cross was ready for Jesus. Modern governments that retain capital punishment endeavor to make the scene of execution solemn and dignified, rather than revolting and terrible. While inflicting justice upon the criminal, they guard him from outrage and cruelty: the gallows is the symbol of law in a sad but sacred act of duty, not of passion let loose for revenge. But among the Romans the criminal sentenced to the cross was given over to the sport of the executioners and the mob. The cross was set up on elevated ground, or by the side of a public road; and the abuse that the rabble might pour upon him on the way, and the reviling of passers-by as he hung upon the tree, were

part of the shame and suffering of this dreadful punishment. Still the roughest natures have freaks of compassion; and, when Roman law had delivered a criminal to this death of ignominy and torture, it did not interfere with acts of pity or of kindness to which bystanders might be moved in his behalf. "In Jerusalem there was a society of ladies which provided a beverage of mixed myrrh and vinegar, that, like an opiate, benumbed the man when he was being carried to execution."¹ As in modern times, a jailer or executioner sometimes shows marked humanity and gentleness in his treatment of a prisoner, so among the Romans there might be a centurion whose feelings would be tender and considerate toward the criminal he was guarding upon the cross. The soldiers had mocked Jesus with the purple robe, the reed in his right hand, the crown of thorns upon his brow. Now they stripped off the robe, and put his own clothes on him; they took away the reed, but left the crown of thorns, the drops of blood trickling from his brow upon his breast; and so they led him out to crucify him.

It was the custom for the condemned to carry his cross upon his shoulder, from the prison or the place of judgment to the place of crucifixion. The cross, however, was not so high nor so heavy as it is made to appear in the representations of art. The upright post was some twelve or fifteen feet high, the feet of the victim resting upon a bracket at a

¹ Deutsch, *The Talmud*, p. 38.



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[Faint, illegible handwriting]

little distance above the ground. The transverse piece was sometimes fastened at the top of the post, in the form of the letter T, in which case he hung with his arms stretched almost perpendicularly above him; sometimes it was inserted into the post at some distance below the top, in which case the arms were stretched out laterally. The carrying of the cross was meant to aggravate the punishment of the victim, both as a mark of disgrace, and by reminding him along the way of the pain he must soon suffer. The two thieves, with their coarse and blunted natures, would care little for this; but to the sensitive frame of Jesus every step was as the driving of a nail, a fresh indignity to his gentle and holy soul.

But so the procession starts, — three men each bearing his cross, each surrounded with a guard of soldiers, and with a great crowd of people running together from all parts of the city; for the streets are astir with strangers on their way to the temple, and the news of the arrest and condemnation of Jesus has already spread to every quarter. It is half an hour from the governor's palace near the temple to the place of crucifixion outside the city gate; and every foot of the way, and every house along the route, is filled with spectators. For this is no ordinary execution. The two thieves get hardly a moment's notice, and hence escape much of the abuse and petty torture they would have suffered from a common rabble. The crowd is bent upon seeing Jesus; but

with what various emotions and cries do they press upon him! In that "great company of people" are many who the other day were shouting, "Hosanna to the King of Israel," but who are now mocking and hooting at the king crowned with thorns. Some who waved palm-branches over his head now try to get near enough to smite him with their staves. It is only Friday: yet the uproar of shame is as great as was the uproar of triumph on Monday, when he came in at the opposite gate of the city. But this stirring of the people is as welcome and hopeful to priests and Pharisees as that was hateful and ominous. But other cries mingle with these shouts of derision. In the crowd are some in whom the sense of justice is strong enough to cry out against this outrage to an innocent man; others there are who remember his words of truth and kindness, or still have a strange awe of him as indeed the Christ; and many are there whom he has healed of their infirmities, or whose friends he has recovered from disease and death. These force their way up to the very cross with wailing and lamentation; and even that rough crowd gives way to the women who press forward with bitter cries; for was ever a soldier void of pity for a woman in distress? But here, as at the moment of his arrest, Jesus alone maintains his composure. This man seemingly so weak and helpless, about to die, his flesh still quivering with the gory stripes, his brow bleeding afresh with the puncture of the thorns, his body too weak to

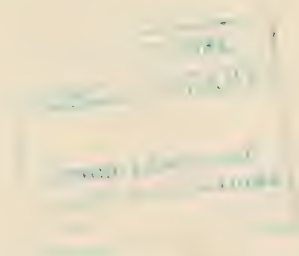
drag any longer the weight of the cross, now looks about him with the compassion of the Saviour, with the majesty of the judge, with the sweet and tender dignity of self-forgetting love, and says, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For, if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in a dry?" He who would have been to Jerusalem the green, fruitful tree of life and salvation, Jerusalem in her priests and rulers has thus set upon to hew down and destroy. What, then, shall be the fate of Jerusalem herself, when as a dry, withered tree she shall be cast out to be trodden under foot, and burnt? Alas for the women who shall be alive at that day to witness its woes for themselves and their children! His heart forgets its own griefs in pity for theirs. At the moment when he is about to be lifted up as a sacrifice for the world's redemption, he pronounces the fate of Jerusalem fixed and sealed. Once more the prophet speaks; but the compassion of the Saviour rises above the severity of the Judge.

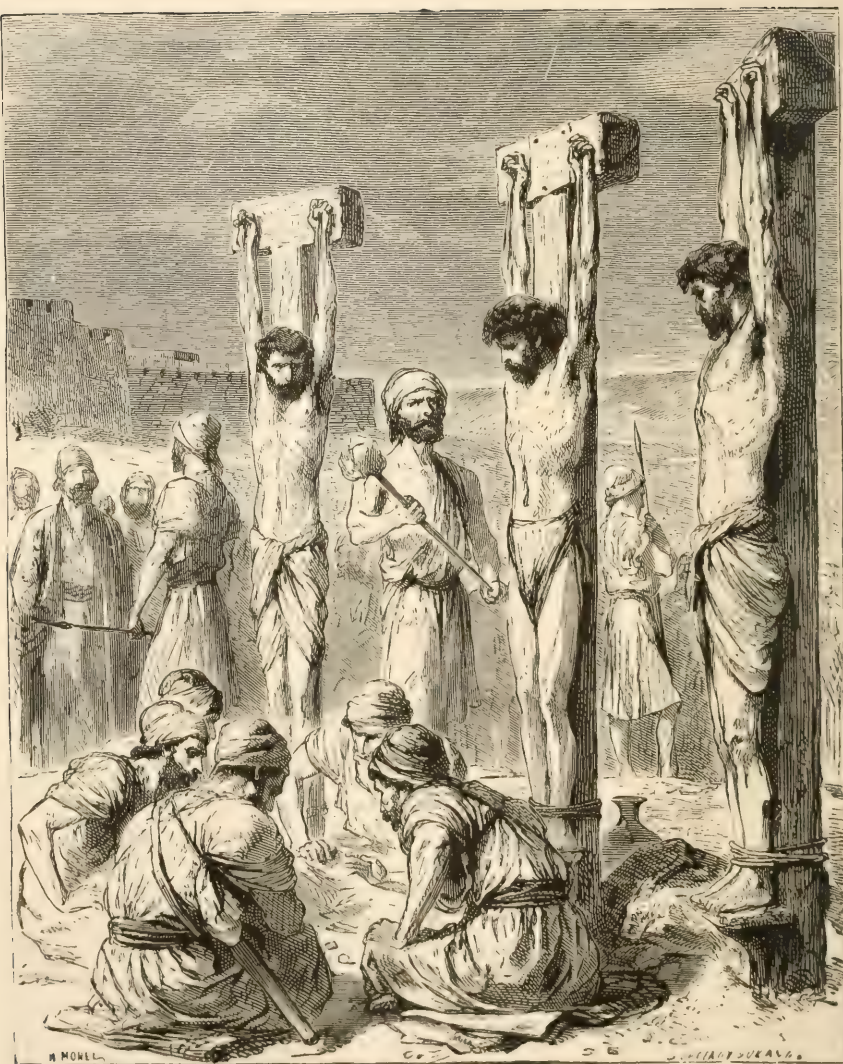
It was while he was thus speaking that Jesus was relieved of the burden of his cross. It is no wonder that a moment before he had sunk under its weight. For twelve hours,—

since the supper with his disciples,— he had not tasted food; for thirty hours he had had no sleep. In that time he had taken leave of the dear family at Bethany; had gone through the trying scene of parting with his disciples in anticipation at the last supper; had endured the agony of Gethsemane; had been seized and dragged about by soldiers; had undergone three trials; had been buffeted, mocked, spit upon, tortured, his back with stripes, his brow with thorns; and all the while his spirit weighed down with the thought that men could so abuse the truth and love of God. That he sank under the cross, was a witness how tenderly human was the frame that bore this divine spirit of sacrifice.

It was near the city gate that Jesus fell; and, touched with pity, the soldiers, instead of compelling him to drag the burden farther, took advantage of a stout countryman coming in at the gate, and laid the cross upon his shoulders, “that he might bear it after Jesus.” That service of compulsion, perhaps of painful drudgery, has made Simon the Cyrenian immortal in legend, in art, and in song.

But the procession has come to a halt. There, just without the gate, where all passing in and out can see the spectacle, is the place of public execution, made so ghastly by the frequent horrors of crucifixion, that the people call it “The place of a skull.” Here the three crosses are laid down; and, before the condemned are nailed to them, the





THEY CAST LOTS FOR HIS VESTURE.

cup of vinegar and myrrh is mercifully offered to each. But Jesus will not drink of it, since the cup of bitterness and death that his Father has given him must be drunk with a conscience clear, willing, and patient to the end. The soldiers now strip him naked, and stretch him upon the cross, placing his body on the wooden pin, or rest, provided for its support. They drive a nail through each hand, bind the feet with a cord, and fasten both with one nail to the wood, then lift up the cross, and drop it into its place with a shock that makes the whole frame quiver with agony. But no groan nor sigh escapes the lips of Jesus. They part for a moment in that prayer which is wreathed about the cross in a perpetual incense of mercy, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

The clothing of the condemned was a perquisite of the soldiers; and four soldiers were stationed at the foot of each cross as a guard. As soon as the cross was planted, the soldiers began to look out for their rewards. The underclothes of Jesus they divided into four parts of about equal value; and then they cast lots for the outside garment, which was a long mantle woven throughout without a seam. It was common to nail up at the top of the cross the offence for which the criminal was executed. But Pilate, who had thrice declared Jesus innocent, prepared as the accusation to be set up over his head the simple statement, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. This

was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. His Jewish persecutors, fearing lest they should in fact be condemned by the very form of his sentence, hastened to Pilate, and begged him to change the title to, "He said, I am King of the Jews." But, though the governor had yielded to the temptation of popularity, at heart he remained true to his first convictions; and he answered, "What I have written, I have written;" and so a heathen ruler certified to all generations that the crucified Nazarene was the Christ.

Crowds were coming and going along the highway; and these railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, "Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days! save thyself, and come down from the cross." The chief priests, who should have set an example of decency and moderation, and whose religious office should have taught them compassion even for the worst criminal, were there mocking him, saying, "He saved others: himself he cannot save. Let Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe." For three hours does Jesus hang there in silence, hearing these taunts and revilings, his life slowly ebbing away under the tortures of his body and the griefs of his soul. At noon the soldiers take their rude meal of coarse bread and sour wine; and, catching the spirit of the Jews, they join in the mockery, and hold up their cups to him, saying, "If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself." And, as if it were not enough that the com-

mon people, the officers of religion, and the officers of law, pour out their abuse upon him, one of the very thieves on the cross at his side begins to rail at him, saying, "If thou be Christ, save thyself and us." But neither the ignominy of the cross, nor the filthy jests and sneers of the mob, nor the blood oozing from his forehead, can obscure that majesty of look in Jesus which again and again had smitten his enemies with an awe of his presence; and the other malefactor, noting that look and remembering the prayer of forgiveness, is so subdued with the sense of something in his fellow-sufferer which is not of earth, that he rebukes his comrade, saying, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? and we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss." Then, turning from penitence and confession to faith and adoration, he cries to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." With a voice full of heavenly love and the consciousness of almighty power, Jesus answers, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

There is a love that no sorrows can quench, no cruelties intimidate, no force restrain; and so the mother of Jesus is by the cross. She is attended by her sister, by Mary Magdalene, and by "the disciple whom he loved." And He who has just declared his sovereignty over the future world, has accepted the homage of the penitent thief, and promised

him a place in paradise, now thrills with the tenderest of human sympathies, fixes his loving gaze upon mother and friend, and says to her, Behold thy son; and, to him, Behold thy mother. Fulfilling this precious testament of love, "from that hour that disciple took her to his own home."

It is high noon, but the sun has ceased to mark the hour. A darkness such as history sometimes records as veiling heaven and earth, and terrifying the animal creation, is spread over all the land. The mob is hushed; for three hours the soldiers watch in silence and in fear. Then a cry almost of despair breaks the gloom: it is the cry of a soul that feels itself compassed about with the darkness of death and of hell, — "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" He is in the death-agony of thirst. Some, half mocking, pretend that he is calling for Elias; but a soldier, more compassionate, reaches to him a sponge dipped in vinegar. He moistens his lips; the darkness vanishes; with clear consciousness he says, "It is finished:" then with a last cry of faith and victory, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," he bows his head, and gives up the ghost.

The earth quakes, splitting the rocks, and rending the veil of the temple. Smitten with awe, the centurion cries, "Truly this man was the Son of God." Yes! all signs attest him now. The Roman governor certifies his kingship; the Roman soldier owns his divinity; the dying thief worships him as Lord; and Jesus, with arms outstretched





upon the cross, dispenses pardon to enemies, paradise to penitents; links himself to earth through love of his mother, and to heaven through faith in his Father. All that he came to be and to do is finished on the cross.

To us there is a significance in the very instrument of his death. Had Jesus been stoned as were prophets of old, as Stephen was by the mob; had he been burnt at the stake as martyrs have been burnt in his name; had he been beheaded as was John the Baptist,—we should have remembered his dying, and perhaps have commemorated the day of his death, but could have had no visible symbol of his suffering. But he was crucified; and the cross was peculiarly a Roman instrument of punishment; and, as the Romans in that time reserved to themselves the death penalty in Judea, the very letter of prophecy was fulfilled in the manner of his dying, in that he was “lifted up.” But this Roman mode of punishment passed away with the Roman power; and now for ages in the wide world nowhere has the cross been used for the execution of a criminal. Long has it ceased to have these common associations of crime and shame; and now, separated from all other instruments of torture and of punishment, it stands before the world exalted and glorified, its outstretched arms a symbol of divine love in sacrifice reaching forth to embrace the world it would redeem.

CHAPTER XL.

HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD.

THAT a man should rise from the dead, is the greatest of wonders. The beginning of life would perhaps be to us as great a wonder, if we could witness that; yet we are so familiar with the fact of life through natural laws, and the fact of death from natural causes, that we seldom think of any thing wonderful in either. But when life has ceased, and death ensued, we know of no natural force or cause that could nullify death and restore life in the same body. If we were told that such a thing had taken place, — that a dead man had come to life again, — we should receive the statement with great caution; should assume that the person was not really dead, but in a stupor or trance, or that the witnesses were deceived through their senses or their imagination. The course of experience, and the nature of the case, are so strongly against the *probability* of one's rising from the dead, that we are ready to say with Thomas, "Except I see it with my own eyes, I will not believe." But we forget that, in that case, we should expect others to

believe upon our testimony; we forget that the thing itself could not be repeated so as to satisfy everybody's doubts, and that there must come a point where such a fact, just like any other, must be taken upon testimony without requiring the evidence of our own senses. However strong may be our feeling against the probability of one's rising from the dead, we must admit the *possibility* of such an event by the direct power of God. If, now, a reason should appear for such a miracle; if it should be put forth to confirm some truth most needful, some promise most helpful to men, and this a truth, a promise, to which God only could give certainty,—then this moral reason for faith in God himself would prepare the way for believing in the outward wonder as from God. The moral reason could not, indeed, prove the miracle as a fact; but, by bringing it into harmony with other facts showing God's love to man, this moral basis for a special act of God's power would so far remove the improbability of the miracle as to open the way for our believing it upon such testimony as we accept for any strange event. Now, Jesus came to teach the eternal life of the soul, and the way of salvation for sinners through the grace of God. The truth he taught, the promise he gave, of such unspeakable value to men, were such as only God could make known with entire certainty. Hence we can at least feel or imagine, that, if ever such a thing as rising from the dead could be, it was most proper, and exactly in place, in

connection with the life and death of Jesus. When we set vividly before us his person, his character, his teachings, his acts; when we look at this one solitary example of perfect truth, perfect wisdom, perfect goodness, whose whole being was to bless and save; when we consider the infinite moment of his message to men, — we feel not only that his dying on the cross was an outrage and a crime, but that it was somehow an incongruity that he should die at all, that his perfect life should be marred by the touch of death.¹ Had Jesus resolved himself into pure spirit, and risen to the skies, or had he gone up to heaven in clouds of glory, we should have felt that the triumph which poets and painters picture for heroes and martyrs after death was proper to him without dying. Hence, when we read that he rose from the dead, there is a congruity between such an outward wonder, and the moral wonder of his life, that makes the fact credible. Indeed, the miracle, that seems to disturb the harmony

¹ Death, as the going-out of animal life, belongs to the course of nature; and in this sense it may be said to be as inseparable from an organic body as is the notion of birth or growth. But death as a human experience, with all that it means to a creature of such affections, hopes, desires, imaginings, as man, is represented in the Bible as an *indignity* put upon man, — a brand of degradation because of sin (Gen. iii. 3, 19; Rom. v. 12). Hence, when at length a man appeared who lived without sin, it seems not fitting that he should die like other men. In such a case, the course of nature was against the higher reason of things, and required to be reversed, to restore the harmony of truth, goodness, and life. We feel such a death to be a wrong that must be righted.

of nature, restores the harmony of a life so rudely broken by the cross, and reveals the higher harmony of the spirit-world, where truth, purity, love, live on unhurt of evil, untouched by decay.

Jesus had promised to rise from the dead. Again and again he told his disciples that he should be crucified, and should rise on the third day; and, in his tender discourse at the last supper, he comforted them with the assurance that in "a little while" they should see him again. He also made the proof of his mission hang upon his rising in three days.¹ Nothing is clearer than that Jesus himself was possessed with the idea that he should rise from the dead. If he did not rise, then for years he lived and acted under an illusion, and such an illusion as in any other person we should call the fancy of a crazed brain. If this were indeed a fancy, an illusion, how much would it take away from the moral force of his teachings and character! But it is simply impossible to reconcile with his wisdom, his clearness, his calmness, his dignity, his majesty; in one word, to reconcile with himself as man and as teacher, — the notion that he spent his life under an illusion.

If Jesus did indeed rise from the dead, the fact was one that could be attested beyond a possibility of mistake; for it must have come under the senses of those who were familiar with his person. It could be made just as clear

¹ John ii. 19.

as any fact of history or of physical science, that rests upon the evidence of the senses. Now, the narrative of the resurrection in the Gospels is so simple, straightforward, and clear, that it carries within itself the marks of truth. The witnesses were capable of knowing the facts; they had no motive for making up the story; their whole after-course was shaped by the fact that Jesus had risen; and they were ready to stake their lives upon having seen him alive after his crucifixion. That Jesus was dead, there could be no doubt. That fact was settled by the officers of the law before his body was taken down from the cross. It was quite usual to break the legs of a criminal on the cross, in order to hasten his death, and put an end to his misery. The Jews, not willing to have these bodies hanging before the city gate on the high sabbath of the Passover, obtained from Pilate an order that their legs should be broken, and they should be taken down from the cross. The soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves; but, when they came to Jesus, they saw that he was dead already: so they did not break his legs; but, to make all sure, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and forthwith there came out blood and water. Pilate also satisfied himself from the centurion that Jesus was dead, before he commanded the body to be delivered to Joseph of Arimathea.¹ This

¹ A good witness for the historical fact of the death of Jesus is the Roman historian Tacitus, who was so careful and conscientious in look-

Joseph was a man of wealth and distinction, a member of the Great Council, who had opposed its sentence against Jesus, being at heart one of his disciples. Danger gives some men courage; and both Joseph and Nicodemus, who had kept back their faith in Jesus for fear of the Jews, came openly forward to honor him after his death. Joseph owned a garden near the place of crucifixion; and there he had just had a new tomb hewn out of the living rock, in which no one had yet been laid. Having prepared the body in the usual way, with linen and spices, he laid it in the sepulchre, closed the door with a great stone, and went home.

The shock of the death of Jesus had driven from the minds of his disciples his promise that he would rise again. Indeed, they do not seem at any time to have taken in that idea in its real significance, nor to have rested their faith and hope upon it under the trial of parting; and hence,

ing up facts for his "Annals." He had the strong prejudices of a Pagan philosopher against Christians and their faith; hence his testimony to the facts that Christ was crucified, and that his religion immediately after began to spread, has greater weight than if he were a partisan. In B. xv. chap. 44, of the "Annals," Tacitus narrates that Nero falsely charged the guilt of setting fire to Rome to "the persons commonly called Christians;" then he adds, "Christus, the founder of that name, was put to death as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, in the reign of Tiberius. But the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also."

instead of staying near the tomb, and watching for some strange event, they thought only of the dead body, and went away, and prepared spices and ointments for that. But, trained in the strictness of the Jewish sabbath, they did not go on that day to the sepulchre even for the purpose of embalming the body, but "rested the sabbath-day according to the commandment." Meanwhile the body of Jesus was under the watch of his enemies. Recalling his saying that after three days he would rise again, the chief priests and Pharisees thought his disciples might "come by night, and steal him away, and say to the people, He is risen from the dead," and so make them more trouble than he had caused them in his life. This was a most absurd notion. It was then the full moon; the nights were as bright as day; the city was crowded with people within and without; the tomb was near the city wall, and not far from the highway; the only access was by the door, which was closed by a great stone; it would have been difficult to open this and carry off the body without being seen, and almost impossible to hide the body beyond discovery. The disciples were most of them strangers in Jerusalem, and could not count upon any one in power to share with them the risk of such a mad attempt, nor to shield them in case of failure. They would know that to be caught at it would cost them their lives; and the poor fellows were too much frightened by what had been done to their Lord to do any thing that could bring

them into notice as his followers. The next we hear of them, they were gathered in a private room, under cover of the night, and with the doors shut, for fear of the Jews.

But, though the taking away of the body by the disciples was not to be thought of, Pilate gave the chief priests a guard of soldiers, and told them to make the sepulchre as sure as they could. Now, the mouth of the tomb was tightly closed by a huge stone slab that fitted to it like a door. The priests stretched a cord, or band, across this door of stone, and sealed it to the rock on either side. This would not close the tomb any more firmly; but the seal was *official*, and to break this was a crime that even thieves would shrink from. A watch was then set around the tomb; and thus the body of Jesus was completely in the power and keeping of his enemies.

Already, on quitting the sepulchre, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna, and Salome had brought sweet spices with which to anoint the body. But evening overtook them before they could return to the garden; and, as that evening brought the sabbath, they postponed their visit to the morning of the first day. Though they rested even from this work of piety, they slept little, but kept together their vigils of grief and love. As soon as the sun set on Saturday, and the sabbath was ended, they made ready their spices and linen; and very early in the morning, when it was yet dark, they hastened to the sepulchre which

they reached as it began to dawn. On the way, they wondered if, at that early hour, any one could be found to roll away the stone from the door; for of course they knew nothing of the sealing and the guard. To their amazement the women found the stone rolled away. At this, Mary Magdalene took a sudden fright. The thought that Jesus had risen did not once enter her mind: somebody had taken away her Lord; but who had done this, or where they had laid him, she could not imagine; and, distracted with fear, she ran to look up Peter and John, and tell them the sad news. No sooner had she gone than the other women went into the sepulchre, but started back with terror at what they saw; for the body of Jesus was not there, but on one side was what appeared to be a young man clothed in a long white robe. It was not yet daylight; and the brightness of his garment was a startling contrast to the darkness of the tomb. A new tremor seized them when this stranger spoke, and said, "Fear not, for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." He then reminded them of the saying of Jesus, that he should rise again the third day, and told them to hasten to tell the disciples he was risen. Convulsed with fear and joy, the women ran to find the disciples, and on the way were met by Jesus himself, who halted them, saying, "All hail!" They fell trembling at his feet, and worshipped him. "Then

said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid. Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there they shall see me."

Meantime Peter and John had hurried back with Mary Magdalene; and John, outrunning them, came first to the sepulchre, and stooping down looked in, but did not enter till Peter coming up led the way, when John followed. They noticed, what the women in their haste and fear had overlooked, that the linen in which Jesus had been wrapped, and the napkin that was about his head, were lying there carefully folded, each in its place. This was a sign that the body had not been hastily snatched away either by enemies or by friends; and now began to dawn upon them the meaning of his saying, "that he must rise from the dead." But this dim faith took as yet no definite shape. It was no use searching for Jesus, nor expecting him: they had not met the women who had already seen him; they could only wonder and wait; and in this frame they went away to their own home.

But Mary could not be satisfied. In running for Peter and John she had missed seeing the angel, and missed seeing Jesus when he met the other women. To her the sepulchre was the one dear sacred spot of earth where last she had seen her Lord. Her one thought was, He was laid in this tomb, and the great stone was set in the door; now the stone is rolled away, and he is not there. And so, when all the rest were gone, Mary still stood at the side of the sepul-

chre weeping. She had not yet had courage to step within the tomb: the place where Jesus had lain seemed too sacred for her to tread upon; and she shrank also from the further shock of seeing and feeling that he was not there. She could only stay and weep till some one should come who could tell her where they had laid him. At length, stooping down and looking into the sepulchre, she saw two angels in white, sitting, the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. At their question, "Woman, why weepest thou?" her grief breaks out afresh: "They have taken away my Lord;" but, before they can tell her that he is risen, she is aware of some one standing behind her, and turning sees a person whom in that uncertain light, and with her eyes blinded with tears, she takes to be the gardener. He repeats the question, "Woman, why weepest thou?" and she, thinking that the gardener can certainly relieve her anguish and suspense, says to him with eager sobs, "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." The voice she knows best, loves best, speaks her name, "*Mary.*" She turns, springs, would fall into his arms, wild with wonder and joy, as she cries, "*Rabboni!*" But Jesus saith to her, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father. But go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." He has vanished; and now, with tears of joy, she

goes to the house where she knows she shall find a company of disciples. They are still mourning and weeping over their Master's death; and so deep and despairing is their sorrow, that, when Mary breaks in upon them with the glowing news "that she had seen the Lord," they will not believe her; and her words seem to them as idle tales.

But the rumor of the resurrection, which the friends of Jesus thus discredited, was spreading among his enemies, and was likely to get abroad through the town. Much as the sanhedrim tried to hush it up, the story of the watch reached even the ears of the disciples. The soldiers set to guard the tomb neither saw nor heard any thing to report till after midnight. Then a shock like an earthquake startled them; and one "whose countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow," coming from heaven, rolled back the stone from the door. At sight of him, the keepers shook with terror, "and became as dead men." When they recovered, the tomb was open, and the body of Jesus gone. Their first thought now was for their own safety; since if any of the sanhedrim should come, and find the body missing, the guard must answer for it with their lives. So they went at once to the chief priests, and told every thing just as it happened. The seventy were hurried together; and to save their credit with the people, and get rid of a troublesome excitement, they bribed the soldiers to say, "His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we

slept." It took much money to buy over the guard, since it was death for a Roman soldier to sleep at his post; but the sanhedrim agreed to make it all right with Pilate, "so they took the money, and did as they were taught." Many Jews believed this story at the time; and some have been weak enough to revive it in our day in order to explain away the resurrection. But it carries its falsehood on its face. If the disciples had stolen the body, the sanhedrim could have had them arrested, and by exposing the trick have crushed out Christianity as an imposture. They would have asked nothing better to justify themselves, and confound the followers of Jesus. Yet, with all judicial means at their disposal, they made no attempt to bring the disciples to conviction, disgrace, and punishment for such a fraud. Not long after, Peter and John declared to the sanhedrim in the boldest manner that Jesus of Nazareth, whom they crucified, God had raised from the dead.¹ The council tried by threats and promises to silence the apostles; but why did it not turn upon them, and charge them with having stolen the body of Jesus, and then punish them for fraud and falsehood? That story served the purpose of an hour, but was too weak an invention to be revived as a means of silencing men who declared that they had seen Jesus alive again after he was crucified.

During that first day there was much discussion among

¹ Acts iv. 10.

the disciples over the report brought by the women and Peter and John from the sepulchre. Not many of them had ventured to visit the tomb for themselves; for the fate of Jesus warned them not to risk their lives by appearing openly as his followers. But the fact was clear, that the tomb had been opened, and the body of Jesus was no longer there. Toward evening, two of the disciples were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus, and earnestly discussing the events of the day. On the road, a stranger joined them; and drawing out the subject of their conversation, about which they were still doubting and wondering, he explained to them the spiritual meaning of the Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ, and showed how it accorded with the true idea of the Messiah, that he should "suffer these things, and enter into glory." As the stranger talked, the hearts of the disciples warmed toward him, till they were aglow with curiosity and wonder and with the fire of devotion; and, on reaching their home, they urged him to tarry with them for the night. The table was soon spread; and, as their guest "sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave to them." The scales dropped from their eyes; they understood why their hearts had so burned on the way: it was Jesus who had talked with them, Jesus who sat at their side. But he had vanished out of their sight. Rising up in haste, they returned to Jerusalem, and found the disciples gathered together, and

listening with eager joy to Peter, who was telling them that he, too, had seen the Lord. Most of them who had doubted the story of the women were already yielding to conviction, and saying, "The Lord is risen indeed."

Yet they did not venture to give utterance to their joy in songs or loud exclamations; for they were surrounded with enemies, and the shadow of the cross was still upon them. Once in the South of Spain, on the evening of the first day of the week, I went to just such a meeting of a few humble men and women who had renounced the Roman Catholic Church for the simple faith of the gospel. In that little circle were some who had been imprisoned, exiled, threatened with death; among them the father and mother of Matamoras, who had just died, in exile, of his persecutions suffered in Spain. The house in which the meeting was held was closed and darkened; the disciples came after nightfall, one by one so as not to attract notice, and gained admittance by a secret signal. When all were assembled, they talked and prayed in low voices, but did not dare to sing lest they should be overheard and betrayed. Thus shut in from the knowledge of the world and from the hatred of priests and persecutors, how sweet, tender, and precious was their communion with their Lord, whose presence they felt though they had not seen! I fancied myself in that room in Jerusalem, with the cross still fresh in view, "when the doors were shut where the disciples were assem-

bled, for fear of the Jews." But to *them* it was given to see the Lord. A few moments before, the door was opened to the disciples from Emmaus, who gave the concerted signal; then all was made fast again by the porter. And there, without knocking, without opening, "stood Jesus himself in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." But they were terrified beyond measure; even those who had already seen him during the day were affrighted at this mysterious entrance into the room, and "supposed that they had seen a spirit." To calm their minds, Jesus showed them his hands, his feet, and his side, marked with the wounds of the cross, and asked them even to handle him, and make sure that he had flesh and bones. And now for very joy they could not believe their eyes, but stood motionless in wonder. Not till he called for meat, and "did eat before them," did they recover from their fright so as to realize that their Lord was indeed among them, and to listen to his words. Then he made clear to their understanding the teachings of the Old Testament concerning Christ; and how by his sufferings and death he "had fulfilled all things written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets and in the Psalms." And, having thus opened the kingdom of heaven through the forgiveness of sins, he commanded them to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

While waiting in Jerusalem for the power that Jesus had promised them "from on high," the disciples were often

consulting about their future plans and hopes; and they met stately on the first day of the week. At their next meeting, Thomas, who had been absent from the first, was with them; and, Jesus appearing as before, the doubter, confuted by his own words, believed with eyes, lips, heart, confessing Jesus his Lord and his God.

The appearances of Jesus at the Sea of Tiberias, at a mountain in Galilee, and at Bethany, to be treated in the following chapters, complete the record of the ways in which "he showed himself alive after his passion." That, in view of the life and character of Jesus, it was credible that he should rise from the dead, and that the fact of his resurrection would be peculiarly capable of proof, has been shown at the beginning of this chapter; and now, on reviewing the evidence, it is plain that the fact as stated, and this alone, can satisfactorily account for the story and its effects.

If Jesus did indeed rise, the witnesses to the fact could not have been deceived. They knew him intimately; they were numerous, and were on the quick to test the reality; they saw him often, and under a great variety of conditions, during a period of forty days. As they could not have been deceived, neither could they have been deceivers. They had no motive for making up such a story. If false, their detection was sure: they could be made to produce the body, or tell what had become of it, or be punished for their deception. They had nothing to gain, but every thing to

lose, by inventing a story that Jesus had risen. He had been crucified on the charges of blasphemy and sedition; and for them to avow themselves his disciples would be to provoke his fate as accomplices. There was nothing in the world to tempt men to start such a report; yet we find these men giving their whole lives to declaring the fact that Jesus rose from the dead, saying they were witnesses to the fact, and suffering imprisonment, torture, death, rather than take back that testimony. And the use they made of the resurrection was to persuade men to forsake their sins, and lead holy lives. The witnesses sought for themselves neither money, power, office, nor fame, but were ready to die for their word. Such is not the manner of impostors.

The notion that the story of the resurrection was a myth, — not at first in the Gospels, but which grew up in later times to throw a halo about the death of Christ, — will not bear the test of the narrative. For here we have, from beginning to end, internal evidence of this being a true story, and freshly recorded at the time. When we reflect that the disciples were Jews, and that, up to the arrest of Jesus, they clung to the notion that he would somehow show himself a king, we can understand how little impression his allusions to his rising again would have been made on their minds, and how completely their hopes were dashed by his crucifixion. They did not once think of watching the tomb, nor of going to see if he had risen. They

thought too much of their own safety to hang about the sepulchre ; they were too full of grief to remember promises. And when some did go to the tomb, not to seek the living Jesus, but to embalm his dead body, they could not believe that he had risen ; and, after they had seen him, others would not believe their story. Now, all this, which goes to discredit the faith and love of the disciples, accredits the story. It does credit to their honesty as narrators of fact, and has nothing of the air of a myth. So of all the sayings and doings of Jesus. They are in perfect keeping with his character. He does not show himself off as a wonder, and does not make weak, vague, or mysterious communications, such as legends ascribe to persons said to appear from the spirit world ; but, having satisfied his disciples that he is their Lord, he gives them plain, clear, earnest spiritual instruction about his own person and work, and their duty. Every thing in the story comports with a record of facts.

But two scenes in particular show it to be real,—the heart-broken Mary, the boasting, swaggering Thomas. Mary following the body to the tomb to see where it was laid, going early to anoint it, in her fright at the open door, running to tell the disciples that the body had been taken away, coming back to weep at the sepulchre, entreating the gardener to help her find her Lord ; and then that moment so simple and so dignified, so tender and so sublime, the ecstasy of a human joy, the calmness of a divine majesty,—

all this witnesses for its own truth. Only on the supposition that Jesus had risen, and stood by Mary's side, can we account for that scene which has never been attained to by poetry or art, and which was never invented by man,—
“MARY,” “RABBONI.”

Then, Thomas! who, like Peter, had said, “Let us go and die with him,”¹ like Peter ready to assert himself, now putting his own senses, his own doubts, his own reason, above the testimony of all his brethren, and in the violence of self-will proposing to subject the wounded body of his Lord to a degrading test. How true, alas, is this to nature! and how true does one feel the narrative to be, as it shows Thomas overwhelmed with shame at his own words, rebounding from the extravagance of doubt to the ecstasy of faith and adoration! Ah! who would not kneel by his side, to catch the breath of that wondrous benediction, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed”?

Two collateral proofs establish the place of the resurrection in history. At the crucifixion we find the disciples disheartened, wavering, hiding away; their king crucified, themselves in fear of the Jews. A few days later we find them boldly proclaiming themselves believers in Jesus as the Christ, and preaching the most spiritual views of his person, his teachings, his death, and his kingdom. Something

¹ John xi. 16.

momentous must have happened to cause this great change in their inner views and feelings and their outward demeanor. Now, the resurrection, which they proclaim as a fact, does account for this change ; and nothing else can.

Again : a few months later we find a man of liberal culture, but of intense Jewish prejudices ; a man of extraordinary powers of reasoning, and of marked sincerity of character ; a man of strong ambition, and who had the finest prospects that could then open to a Jew, — we find this Saul of Tarsus, who had volunteered to persecute the new faith, suddenly embracing it, relinquishing all worldly honors and hopes, and devoting himself to preaching the cross, with a firmness, an earnestness, a persistency, a moral heroism, almost beyond parallel. Now, this man was a trained logician, and had an honest love of truth. He wrote a letter to the Corinthians, the genuineness of which has not been denied, and could not be questioned, since the epistle is quoted as his by the earliest fathers. In that epistle Paul declares that Jesus rose from the dead, that he was seen of Cephas, of James, of all the apostles, and of above five hundred brethren at once ; and then he adds, “ of whom the greater part remain unto this present.”¹ Paul knew these witnesses. Cephas, or Peter, he knew intimately ; James and the other apostles he had conferred with at Jerusalem, about his own work. Many of the five

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 6.

hundred were personally known to him ; he knew their character, had tested their evidence, and was ready to stake his existence upon the fact that Christ died, was buried, and rose again the third day. That a man of such breadth, keenness, candor, and honesty, made this examination of eye-witnesses, and came to this conviction, gave up every thing for his belief, lived in it, died for it,—this almost judicial investigation and decision at the time sweeps away the qualms of modern doubters, and thrills our inmost being with Paul's triumphant strain, "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept."

CHAPTER XLI.

ONE LAST LOOK AND WORD.

BEFORE finally quitting the earth, the risen Lord would visit once more the two spots that had been to him most dear, — Galilee and Bethany. One more look at the lake, one more look at the home, and he will return to the glory he had with his Father “before the world was.”¹ At both places, too, he would once more converse with his disciples amid scenes endeared by so many memories of his earthly life. In sending out his messengers for the first preaching of his gospel, Jesus had instructed them to “shake off the dust from their feet” at places that should reject the message, “for a testimony against them;”² yet he lingers upon the earth that had rejected and crucified him, presses it lovingly with those sacred feet that had been pierced with nails, and thus blends the most tender and beautiful of human affections with the grace and mercy that his resurrection had attested as divine. The more he shows himself the man, the more we see in him the God. Earth is no longer so

¹ John xvii. 5.

² Matt. x. 14.

remote nor estranged from heaven as to cut off communication between the two. Jesus was born as helpless as any babe, and he died seemingly as helpless as any man; but the Christ who has risen from the grave, and is capable at will of appearing as man or vanishing as a spirit, belongs to a sphere above the earth; and *he* it is who now pauses to look with human eyes, memories, and loves upon the favorite spots of earth before he takes up his final abode in heaven.

He had appointed a general gathering of his disciples at a mountain in a secluded part of Galilee, where he afterwards "was seen of above five hundred at once;"¹ and, in view of this meeting, the apostles had gone as far as the lake, where most of them had their homes. They were too poor to be idle; and, as a party of them (seven in all) were standing one evening on the shore, Peter said, "I go a-fishing;" whereupon they all decided to go with him, and, getting into a vessel, pushed out into the lake. There they lay all night long casting and drawing their net, but caught nothing. As day began to break, they despaired of any luck, and were about to set in for the shore, when, looking thither, they saw in the gray dawn some one standing, and watching their movements. Hailing them, he asked what they had caught; and, when they answered "Nothing," he said, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye

¹ Matt. xxviii. 16; 1 Cor. xv. 6.

shall find." The stranger might be some old fisherman who thought he knew the lake and its fish better than they, and, like his craft, was ready with his advice. At any rate, there could be no harm in trying again: so they cast their net as he told them; and now "they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes."

There is an instinct in love, that is quicker than reason; and "that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord." John felt the presence where Peter saw only the wonder; but, at that hint, Peter girt his coat about him, and leaped into the sea. Here is Peter again, with his old impulsiveness of temperament; only this is not the impetuosity of pride nor of zeal, but of love. He does not now ask to walk upon the sea, as a sign that this is Jesus indeed; but, trusting to his sturdy arms, he goes plashing through the water, and runs dripping up the beach. But the other disciples are not far behind him. Getting into the boat, they drag the net after them to the shore, where Peter runs to help them; and, all tugging together, they draw the net to land, and find it "full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three." Great was their surprise, that, "for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken;" but they were speechless with amazement when, on turning round, they saw on the shore "a fire of coals, and fish laid thereon, and bread," and heard themselves called to come and eat. "And none of the disciples durst ask, Who art thou?

knowing that it was the Lord." Hungry as they were, they would not even touch the food ; but Jesus, drawing nearer, took bread and fish, and distributed with his own hands.

The meal over, the Lord turned to Simon Peter, and said, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" Once Peter was forward to say, "Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended;" and just now he had jumped into the sea, leaving the rest to follow in the boat, as though he were more eager than they to greet the Lord. But now he drops the tone of boasting; he makes no comparison of himself with others; the very question of Jesus is probing his heart. Yes, he has been vain, weak, impulsive, more confident than trustful; but it was the generosity of love that prompted his self-assertion; and, though in a sudden moment of bewilderment and anguish he did forsake his Master, even then he did not abandon his love. That love drew from him bitter tears; that love drew him after the cross, and early to the sepulchre; and now with the humility of one who has fallen, but also the full consciousness that because of this fall he knows his heart better than before, he appeals to Jesus: "Yea, Lord: thou knowest that I love thee." "Jesus said to him, Feed my lambs." He has no praises nor honors to bestow for the profession of love. Love must be shown by service, by work and sacrifice. And to this

forward and fiery disciple Jesus assigns a task that calls for meekness and gentleness,—the quiet, patient work of caring for the lambs, giving instruction, counsel, guidance, to the young disciples of the flock.

A second time Jesus asks, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” A second time the disciple feels the probe; and now it goes still deeper; for Jesus does not ask whether Peter has a greater love than the rest, but whether he really *loves* at all. In the same tone of humility and reverence, and with the same consciousness of sincerity, Peter answers, “Yea, Lord: thou knowest that I love thee.” Again he receives the command, “Feed my sheep.” And now the third time comes the searching question, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” Alas, poor Peter! Was ever a soul put to such a testing? Not a word of doubt or reproof is spoken, not one allusion to what he had said and done on that eventful night. But his eyes are swimming, his heart is breaking; for with this third question he is again in the court of the high priest’s palace, he is cursing and denying, he hears the crowing cock; he sees Jesus buffeted, scourged, mocked, bleeding, dying, and himself afar off with the oath of denial blistering his lips even while his Lord prays, “Father, forgive them.” Yet in the depth of his heart he does love, he did love even then; and, bitterly as he wept for his sudden sin, he is more grieved that Jesus should seem to doubt him still. This three times asking cuts

him deeper than any censure. What can he say? What shall he do? Ah! he is dealing now with no mere human master; his risen Lord can search the heart: and so from the depths of his own consciousness he throws himself upon the consciousness of Jesus, "Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee." And yet there comes no word of assurance, no token that it is enough: only the same command, Let love, then, do its task,—
"Feed my sheep."

But here was an assurance stronger than words could have given. This command was a trust; and, since the kingdom of Christ could advance only by knowledge and truth, the trust of feeding and guiding his disciples was the highest mark of confidence and honor. How touchingly Peter reminds us of this in his epistles to believers, where he says, "Ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls;"¹ and to the "elders" he says, "Feed the flock of God, not as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock; and, when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."² Thus Peter came to know and prize the honor that the Lord had conferred upon him in intrusting to him the care of the lambs, the feeding of the sheep.

At this moment too, in the tone of the third question, the

¹ 1 Pet. i. 25.

² 1 Pet. v. 1-4.

heart of Jesus had responded to the heart of Peter. Jesus had put his question in a word that signifies such high and sacred love as men render to God ; and Peter had answered by a word that expresses the warmth of human affection. But, in the third question, our Lord takes this word out of Peter's mouth, as though he would open again his heart as a man, to answer to the yearning, burning, yet grieving, breaking heart of his disciple. Recognizing thus the sincerity of Peter's love, the Lord predicts to what this love will bring him, — the loss of liberty, the loss of life. "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest ; but, when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thine hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." Yes, he too should be stretched upon the cross. "And, when Jesus had spoken this, he saith to Peter, Follow me." Let love prove itself by obedience and by sacrifice. The disciple who would follow Jesus in his triumph and to his glory must follow him in his own way. As the resurrection gives to his followers no exemption from dying, neither does his glory procure them exemption from suffering. In the spirit of labor and of sacrifice, they must follow Jesus as he was on earth, if they would be with Jesus where he is in the glory of his Father.

It is not possible in a moment to change one's temperament, nor even by the severest discipline to conquer all its

tendencies. So Peter's old impulse to have his say about every thing seizes upon him as he sees John also following; and he said to Jesus, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" But, though Jesus would impart every thing to faith, he never yielded any thing to curiosity.

A poor widow, born a heathen, yearning for a word of mercy, begging even for the crumbs from the Master's table, could win a miracle of healing as a reward of her faith; but not the clamor of the people, the official demand of the Pharisees, nor the authority of Herod, could extort from him a sign. So here Jesus taught Peter that we should rather study to know and do the will of God, than speculate about his providence: direct, present, personal obedience to Christ, rather than curious inquiry as to details of his kingdom, is the mark of devotion to that kingdom, as well as to Christ himself. Peter had been told that love meant service and sacrifice; and the life of toil and the death of pain before him were then illumined and ennobled by the summons, "Follow me." But Peter must know what service and what fate were appointed to John. The Master answered, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" and, to shut off all such inquiry, he added with emphasis, "Follow thou me." In the service of Christ, it is the duty of each and every one to stand in his own place, there to live and to die with a loving, patient, obedient heart; for allegiance to the Master is personal, and must

be rendered by each for himself, apart from the circumstances or position, the performances or the failures, of others. The notion went out among the disciples, that John should not die. But Jesus had said, "If I will that he tarry till I come;" and, to the believer, death is only a coming of the Lord to set free his spirit, that it may be with Christ in his glory.

CHAPTER XLII.

IN THE HIGHEST.

NOW that Jesus had risen from the dead, his ascent to heaven in an open and visible manner was a simple necessity to the moral value of his resurrection, and to the final impression of his life, his teaching, and his death. To have fallen again under the power of death, and have been again laid in the grave, — as must have happened to Lazarus, — in the case of Jesus would have made of the resurrection a mere dramatic show of power, without moral significance. When Jesus raised Lazarus he showed his power over the physical laws, processes, and effects involved in death and decay. But Jesus rose from the dead to make known his power over death itself, — in all its fears, its pains, its possibilities, in its forebodings equally with its effects, in those moral and spiritual associations and issues of which the physical event is only a type. The resurrection of Lazarus was declarative: the resurrection of Jesus was redemptive, attesting his own words in that grand prophetic hope of humanity, “I am the resurrection and the life: he that

believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live;”¹
“Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”² Had even his body then sunk back into the arms of death, how weak had seemed that promise, how vain that hope!

If, on the other hand, Jesus had simply vanished from among his disciples, the impression of his resurrection might in time have vanished also. Again and again had he appeared to them suddenly in his familiar form, then disappeared as suddenly, they knew not how. Where he was in the intervals, they could not guess, they dared not ask. If his last disappearance had been after this fashion, they would long have watched and waited for his coming again, would slowly have given him up; and then, not knowing how to trace nor where to place him, they might have fallen to doubting whether his appearances were not apparitions merely, without substantial identity. But Jesus joined their last view of him on earth with his return to heaven as a palpable reality.

After the scene at the lake, he had met his disciples at a mountain in Galilee, and had there given the apostles their final commission, saying, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and, lo, I am with you alway, even

¹ John xi. 25.

² John vi. 54.

unto the end of the world.”¹ But, for this commission, they should receive a special power from on high; and for this they must return to Jerusalem, and there await the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

For the period of forty days after his passion had Jesus thus at intervals “showed himself alive to his disciples by many infallible proofs, speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.”² At length, one morning when the eleven were together, Jesus being with them, they asked him, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” Their old Jewish hope of a conquering and reigning Messiah, crushed by the death of their Master, was revived by his resurrection. Now they fully believed in Jesus as the Christ; but they would not understand his ways. How well it would have suited them if he had gone and shown himself to the sanhedrim and to Pilate as alive from the dead, and, in the surprise and terror of his enemies, had proclaimed his kingdom! But this sacred seal of his mission was not for a show to sceptics. For a moment he would have been to them a wonder and a terror; but soon they would have said again, “He hath a devil.” His kingdom was the kingdom of truth; and truth must rest upon moral conviction. The resurrection had answered its end in convincing and confirming the disciples; the fact was made sure by sufficient witnesses · but it was not the fact,

¹ Matt. xxviii. 18, 19.

² Acts i. 3.

but the spiritual truth that this fact taught and certified, which was to be preached. There could be no gain in Jesus' remaining upon earth to show himself to strangers: since the fact of his death and his identity would have to be established in each case; and then he would be only a wonder among men. There would have been no gain in his setting up a kingdom of earthly power: since it matters little for the real good of human society how the forms of government or the persons of rulers may change, so long as the hearts of men — the seat of evil — remain unchanged. "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put into his own power." Leave the management of the kingdom to Him who rules. Show your faith in the kingdom, and your love for it, by proclaiming the truth in which it rests, by which it rules. "Ye shall be witnesses for me."

As this conversation began, they had set out upon the old familiar walk over the Mount of Olives. This little party of twelve men, thus quietly walking, would attract no special attention; and they went on like any wayfarers, till they had turned the shoulder of the mountain where the little village of Bethany came in sight, and Jerusalem was lost to view. On that side the mountain was quite bare of culture and of dwellings, save where the little village of date-trees nestled in its sheltered nook. At this point Jesus halted; and he who had been walking and talking with the apostles,

as he had so often done just there in the week before his death, now lifted up his hands, and blessed them. "And, even as he blessed them, he was parted from them, and taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." The song of his birth once more wraps the earth in the folds of heaven, — here the benediction, there the glory. With hands uplifted he blesses the disciples, leaves to men peace and good-will, and then goes up to God in the highest.

Long do the disciples stand looking steadfastly, wistfully, toward heaven as he goes up; when suddenly two angels are beside them, who say, "Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." They returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and went forth, and preached everywhere.

From that hour the most momentous fact in history, — the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth, — the most potent means of moral reform, the most mighty influence of spiritual experience, began to work in human society, transforming that society, purifying and ennobling it, till at length Christianity has become its own witness; itself greater than all its miracles, the wonder of the ages, attesting Jesus as the Son of God, and his word as the power of an endless life.

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